

# THE BRITISH ARMY



THE PEEPS-STORIES









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H M KING GEORGE V



THE "PEEPS" SERIES

THE  
BRITISH ARMY

BY

W. G. CLIFFORD

CONTAINING 12 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS  
IN COLOUR AND 35 IN LINE IN THE TEXT

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## EXPLANATION OF ARMY TERMS

*(It should be noted that the figures quoted are subject to constant variation).*

### INFANTRY.

IN the Infantry the establishment of a COMPANY is 227 of all ranks. The COMPANY is divided into four PLATOONS, and four COMPANIES comprise a BATTALION which, with staff, etc., is over 1,000 strong. A REGIMENT may have any number of BATTALIONS. Two or three is usual in time of peace, but during the great war some REGIMENTS have as many as twenty-four BATTALIONS. FOUR BATTALIONS of Infantry make a BRIGADE—approximately 4,055 of all ranks.

### CAVALRY.

The SQUADRON, numbering 158 of all ranks, is the smallest unit in the Cavalry, and a REGIMENT consists of three SQUADRONS. Three REGIMENTS of Cavalry make a BRIGADE.

### ARTILLERY.

In the Royal Artillery, Horse and Field, the BATTERY is the unit. Each BATTERY has six guns and an establishment at war strength of about 200 officers, non-commissioned officers, and men. Three BATTERIES of Field Artillery make up a BRIGADE, but there are only two BATTERIES in a BRIGADE of Horse Artillery.

### A DIVISION

usually comprises four INFANTRY BRIGADES, with Cavalry, Artillery, Engineer, Medical, and Transport units.

### AN ARMY CORPS

probably comprises two or three DIVISIONS.

# THE BRITISH ARMY

## CHAPTER I

### HOW THE ARMY BEGAN

A PEEP at the origin of the British Army takes us back to a very remote period in the history of "our rough island story." If the subject is dealt with at all thoroughly, we ought to begin with the Ancient Britons opposing the hosts of Rome, and "carry on," as they say in the Service, through a catalogue of almost continuous fighting, up to the period of the Restoration — then we might well commence a fresh chapter with the establishment of a standing army in this country. Such a plan is quite beyond the scope of the present volume, as, much to our regret, we cannot



Ancient British Soldier.

afford space to dwell on the brave old times when, as Clode states, "every freeman between the ages of fifteen and sixty years was obliged to be provided with armour to preserve the peace ; but he was

## The British Army

protected from leaving his county or shire, save upon the coming of strange enemies into the realm.”

Our Army, as we understand it to-day, differs in its genesis from the force mentioned by Clode. When every freeman had to be able to fight as part of his duty to the Crown, we doubtless had a nation in arms, but not an army ready to “go anywhere, and do anything.” Soldiering was then woven into the fabric of the national life, and there was no organized body of men of all ranks, trained exclusively to the profession of arms, and in a state of constant readiness for war at home or abroad. Even the most powerful monarchs had to consider many local and personal factors before they could wage war on a large scale, especially on the Continent; and the purely military value of an armed people differed in vital essentials from the potentialities of an army which has no

business to “reason why.” An army of this type, a professional standing army, was viewed with suspicion and mistrust for very many years by the people of this country. There was always a feeling that the Crown might use such a force to interfere with the liberties of those bold freemen who had fought their



Anglo-Saxon Soldier.

## How the Army Began

own battles for centuries on many an historic field. This feeling died hard, so hard that its ghost is still with us. Every year the Army Act has to be passed by Parliament, or the Army would cease to exist in law. This prerogative of the people is very jealously guarded and upheld, and is convincing evidence of the strength of the original feeling against the establishment of our standing Regular Army.

So intense was the national dislike of a permanent military force, that it might almost be said that our standing Army of to-day was established by a ruse. When the Army of the Commonwealth was disbanded on the return of Charles II., a fanatic named Thomas Venner headed a body of extremists called "millenarians" or fifth-monarchy men, and a certain amount of rioting and bloodshed in the City of London took place. This state of affairs gave the Duke of York, afterwards James II., an excuse to approach the King with a request to retain the services of General Monk's Troop of Horse and Regiment of Foot. The request was granted, and Monk's regiment was saved from disbandment on the very day when it was to have been paid off. Subsequently, this regiment became the Coldstream Guards, and our gallant Coldstreamers are very proud of the fact that they are one of the very few Regular regiments in the Service which escaped disbandment, when the Restoration put a temporary check on the career of other units. Additional regiments were soon placed on the establishment. The

## The British Army

Life Guards, the Horse Guards, the Grenadier Guards, and many others were soon in being, and our standing Army, thus established, has continued without interruption until the present day.

At the same time, the ideal of a national Army was never abandoned. The Militia, a direct survival of our earliest military forces, remained the constitutional force of this country, and it followed the ancient model closely enough to retain an element of compulsion evidenced by the Militia Ballot. During the Napoleonic wars the home defence Militia was supplemented by corps of Volunteers, and the great Volunteer movement flourished. It dwindled to nothing, however, during the peace which followed the overthrow of Napoleon, and was not restored until the Volunteer Force was formed in 1859. Quite recently, during the administration of Haldane, great changes took place, changes which transformed the Militia into the Special Reserve, and the Volunteers into the Territorials. The underlying idea of



Militiaman.

these changes was to weld all the military forces of the country into a more effective whole, to knit the parts closer together, to make one great army instead of three different forces, whose military relationship to each other was not close and distinct enough for modern requirements. Enlistment became universal, the old Volun-





A LONDON TRAINED BAND. PAGE 10



## How the Army Began

teers were enrolled, but the Territorials were duly attested as Regular soldiers are ; and in many other respects a strenuous attempt was made to bring every soldier of the King in line, or as near in line as could be considering the amount of time the individual could spare for training.

Differences remain, however, mainly because we are so tenacious of our national ideals, and the result is that our Territorials are no more legally liable for service abroad than the old man-at-arms was who could not be called upon to leave even his shire or county, "save upon the coming of strange enemies into the realm." The same principle was part of the constitution of the old Militia, and the consequences would often have been serious but for the splendid spirit which induced the Militia to volunteer for service beyond the seas whenever required in the time of war. The same spirit has descended upon our Territorials, who have proved themselves quite as ready to fight abroad as the Militia lads were who fought, and fought well, at Waterloo.

As our Territorials have done such splendid work on the Continent, it is worth while to take more than a passing glance at the history of this fine force. Rightly considered, the Territorials are the direct descendants of those brave fighters of the past who, as far back as the reign of Edward III., were formed into companies of archers in London. These companies, under Henry VIII., were constituted a corporate body, known as

## The British Army

“The Fraternity of St. George.” The Honourable Artillery Company, the oldest effective body of troops under the Crown, dates from about this period, as it was first formed as a “City Trained Band” in 1585, when the country was menaced by the Spanish foe. In that year, as Pennant tells us, “a new military society

arose in the city; which, in these affrighted times, finding itself grievously harassed by continual musters, and exercising of men, found a remedy in the gallant spirit of many of the citizens. A number (among whom were officers who had served with credit abroad) formed themselves into a respectable body of volunteers, exercised themselves, and trained others to the art of war. Within two years there were near 300 merchants and others capable of training and teaching soldiers the management of their pieces, pikes

and halberds; to march, countermarch, and ring. They made a considerable figure at the camp at Tilbury, in the celebrated year 1588. After that time this useful discipline was neglected, but in 1610 it revived, and the volunteers became so numerous as to amount to 6,000 men.”

Troublous times brought the Volunteers again to the



An Archer of the time of Edward III.

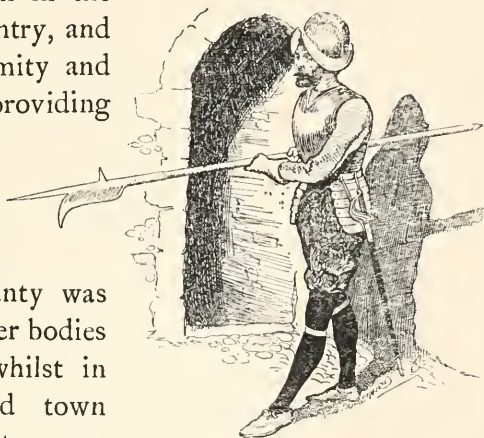
## How the Army Began

ore, as the force, revived under Lord Shelburne's administration in 1782, flourished greatly during the French revolutionary war. It took a fresh lease of life in 1794, and again in 1798. In the latter year, when Parliament assembled, the King intimated to the two Houses that the French contemplated an invasion of the kingdom. This communication called forth the spirit of patriotism both in the legislature and the country, and there was equal unanimity and liberality manifested in providing the means of defence.

In the former, Bills were passed, making a large addition to the Militia; and every county was directed to raise volunteer bodies of yeomanry cavalry, whilst in almost every city and town volunteer corps of infantry were embodied, trained and armed. A

subscription was also entered into for the support of the war, and about a million and a half was voluntarily contributed by the people, in addition to the sum raised by war taxes and a loan.

There was ample reason for this manifestation of loyalty and patriotism. At that time, what the Government of the French Republic termed "The Army of England," because it was intended to invade this



An English Pikeman.

## The British Army

country, was stretched from Brest to Antwerp, and numbered 100,000 men. The General-in-Chief was Napoleon Bonaparte. About 300,000 additional troops were divided into the armies of the Rhine, of Switzerland, of Italy, of the South, and of the interior. These formidable forces were quite ready, and capable of speedy concentration. In order to accelerate his operations, Bonaparte had, at the commencement of the year, sent some of his ablest officers to every division of his army. In the canal of Brussels rafts 96 feet in length were being prepared. Several of them were to be joined together with iron chains, and were to carry cannon and defensive works. Each raft was to be able to ship one thousand men, and capable engineers, working under the direct guidance of Bonaparte, were busily employed in fitting out these formidable aids to invasion. The civil dissensions and change of government in France delayed this enterprise against England from being undertaken at the time, but the "Army of England" was kept embodied, and occupied cantonments opposite the English coast until the end of the war.

At the commencement of the last century, the peace of Amiens was concluded, and the military preparations of Great Britain were suspended. In April, 1803, war broke out again, the coasts of France and Belgium opposite to England were once more lined with troops, and articles were constantly appearing in the official papers of Paris and Brussels calculating the time in

## How the Army Began

which this army, still commanded by Bonaparte, might reach London. So threatening were the signs of the times, that on June 18 a royal message was sent to Parliament, announcing that for the security and defence of the country His Majesty thought it necessary that a large additional force should be raised immediately. The legislature responded by passing acts to incorporate an army of reserve, 50,000 strong, and to enable His Majesty to raise a levy *en masse* in case of invasion. This was followed by re-embodiment of those Volunteer corps which had been disbanded, and by raising new ones. Such was the spirit shown that on December 9, Mr. Yorke, then Secretary for War, spoke highly of the discipline and ability of the volunteers. In point of numbers the growth was amazing considering the population at that time. On July 1, 1803, upwards of 60,000 Volunteers were enrolled, and less than a year afterwards the Volunteer establishment reached the highly creditable figure of 379,943 of all ranks. This vast force was well equipped, some corps finding their own uniforms and arms, others being clothed and armed by the Government, while some found their own uniforms, the Government supplying arms. The various regiments met regularly to drill and manœuvre, occasionally there were field-days, when various combined evolutions were practised. Once a year, the Volunteers of every county were reviewed by the Lord-Lieutenant, the King generally inspecting and reviewing those of the

## The British Army

Metropolis. The number of these corps and their spirit precluded the idea of a compulsory call on every man in the country, even if the enemy succeeded in landing. As a matter of historical fact, however, although the finger-posts on the route to the camp of Boulogne were inscribed "Road to London," the hostile army never left the shores of France.

After the peace of 1815, the Volunteer system was again broken up, and the Volunteer corps disbanded, except the yeomanry. But a few bold spirits still kept the idea of voluntary service for home defence alive, just alive, and that was all. In 1803, immediately after the peace of Amiens, a rifle club was established in Kilburn, Middlesex, and was never allowed to die out. Its members, though few in number, maintained at their own expense a practice ground, the necessary buildings, and an efficient staff. When Queen Victoria came to the throne, the club was called "The



Duke of Wellington.

Royal Victoria Rifle Club," and in 1857 consisted of fifty-three effective members, of whom rarely more than twenty appeared on parade. Soon afterwards, this club became the "Victoria Rifles," with the Duke of Wellington as its Colonel, and a full complement of rank and file. It is now the 9th (County of London) Battalion the London Regiment (Queen Victoria's Rifles), and may fairly lay claim to be the oldest connecting-link with the original Volunteer Rifle movement.

## How the Army Began

As a matter of strict official precedent, however, the "Exeter and South Devon Rifle Battalion," officially recognized in 1852, was the first corps constituted under the movement which has culminated in the Territorials of to-day. This movement was not general until 1859, when the formation of Rifle Volunteer corps was sanctioned on a large scale by the War Office, and the Volunteers came into official being all over the country. The record of the force was one of highly creditable individual endeavour on the part of officers and men to retain real military efficiency, and although the force was never called out as a whole to uphold on these shores its motto, "Defence, not Defiance," yet service companies selected from it did excellent work during the South African War.

No mention of our Army would be complete without some reference, be it ever so scanty, to the magnificent Indian and Colonial troops, who have fought side by side with our British-born soldiers on many a stubborn field. But as the native troops in India alone would demand a volume to themselves, it is quite impossible in this work to do more than pay a passing tribute to the gallant warriors of races other than our own who are ever ready to fight for the flag under which they and theirs enjoy freedom and justice. Colonial contingents from our overseas dominions peopled by men of our own blood are handier to describe. They came into great prominence during the war in South Africa, and their heroic deeds on the Continent have earned

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them fresh and undying fame. They are now a permanent and valuable imperial military asset, and yet it is but yesterday since they first saw active service outside their own colonies. In Egypt, in 1885, the colonials made history by arriving to fight far from their homes side by side with our Regular troops, and the following account of the occasion is worth reading, as it shows the real inward feeling which animates our gallant colonials, and also the value of their appearance as a heartening influence, quite apart from their splendid worth as fighting units.

Our author, an officer serving in Egypt at the time, says : “ ‘ Bravo, Australia ! ’ I think this was what we all felt as we saw the colonial contingent arrive in camp. We gave them a regular hearty reception, and they were cheered all along their road out, while the bands of the various regiments in camp headed the column playing many a tune familiar to all Englishmen and Australians alike.

“ The contingent were inspected by the General on arrival in camp, and I am sure he echoed the thoughts of all of us when he said : ‘ In the name of the force I command, I give you a hearty welcome. You are our comrades in arms, who will share the perils, toils, and, I hope, glories of this expedition. We honour the feeling which led you to leave your pleasant homes to war against the desert and its savage inhabitants. You are soldiers as well as Englishmen. The eyes of our common country are on you, and I am sure you will do



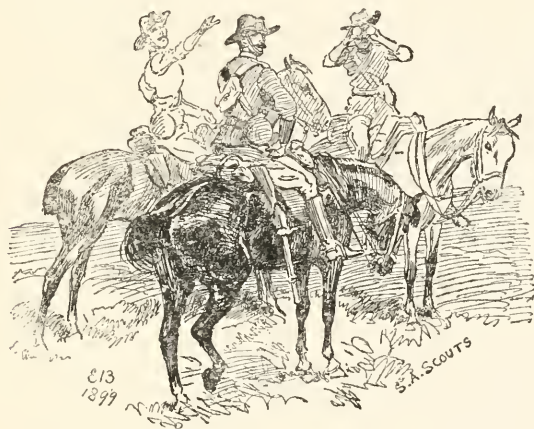


INDIAN SOLDIERS. PAGE 15



## Training the Recruit

credit to the splendid colony which sent you out, and the race to which you belong.' Cheer after cheer rent the air after this, and we hoped the contingent were as pleased with their reception as we were to have them in our midst.



Colonial Scouts.

## CHAPTER II

### TRAINING THE RECRUIT

THE fact that our Militia and Territorials have ever been depended upon to volunteer for active service beyond the seas will serve to show how greatly the voluntary system has always been relied upon in this country. In our Army, as in every other, the first need is men to fill the ranks. These we obtain by voluntary enlistment, and in normal times some thirty thousand men are required every year for the Regular Army alone.

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It is as well to point out that we can never raise these men by any form of compulsion. No matter what may be done for home defence, the professional soldier raised to serve anywhere in peace or war must be a volunteer. Since the days of ancient Rome no nation has tried to send conscripts abroad in time of peace, and the probability of our doing so is too remote to be taken seriously. The real position is that voluntary recruiting lies very near the heart of an Empire like ours, which demands for its security the maintenance in India alone of a white garrison some seventy-five thousand strong.



British Infantryman.

When a man joins our Army of his own accord, he has first to survive the preliminary scrutiny of the recruiting-sergeant. If he passes this first-sight examination, he is weighed and measured and passed on to the doctor for medical inspection. This is quite stiff enough to detect any unsoundness, and when he has passed it the recruit is duly attested before an officer or a magistrate, and subject to final approval by his Officer Commanding, becomes in very truth a soldier of the King. For the next three months, however, he has an absolute right in time of peace to repent of his bargain if he wishes and claim his discharge on payment of ten pounds. The point is curious, because it is perhaps the only purely military

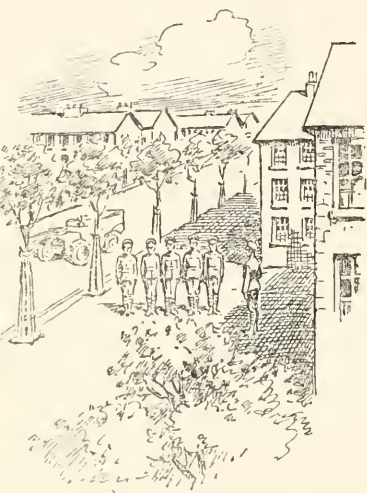
## Training the Recruit

matter regarding which the soldier can do just as he pleases without reference to the wishes of his superiors. No Colonel, General, or other officer, not even the Army Council in all its power assembled, can refuse a recruit his discharge if he has ten pounds ready to pay for it before he completes three months' service and the country is not at war. This right is a direct survival of the old "smart-money" which used to free a recruit in the days of "taking the shilling," and is very jealously guarded in the Army Act. After three months' service, discharge by purchase is a favour which, although seldom or never refused in practice, cannot be claimed as a legal right.

As a matter of fact, but few recruits are bought out of the Army, and the number would be even less if parents and guardians knew the truth before they dipped their hands in their pockets. In this connection, an amusing and perfectly true story is told of a dear old mother, whose youngest son had enlisted, greatly to the horror of the good lady. She had old-fashioned ideas about the Army, and lay awake at nights picturing her beloved boy being bullied by brutal non-coms., half-starved, and subjected to tremendous punishments by cruel officers. So she scraped together ten pounds, and in due course presented herself at the depot where her son was undergoing his recruit's training. He happened to be away on parade when his mother called, and hearing of her mission, the Officer Commanding, who was quite a good sort, took

## The British Army

the old lady on a personally conducted tour around barracks. She was shown the men's reading and recreation rooms, all comfortably furnished, and from the billiard-room window beheld the cricket and football grounds, a fives-court, and a spacious building, which her guide informed her was the men's gymnasium. Then she was led gently on to the barrack-



Scene at Aldershot.

room, shown the comfortable bed in which her son slept, his kit and clothes, and then on to the cheerful mess-room in which meals were served. Finally, she was shown into the cook-house just before "Dinners up," when, as Charles Lamb all but said, "a premonitory moistening overflowed her nether lip." Then her son was brought before her, looking the picture of health and merry content. "John," she said, "I came to buy you out, but I'll not do it now,

no fear. Why, I couldn't keep you like this, my son. You grumbled more than enough at home before you enlisted, and there'd be no doing anything with you at all after this. No, my son, you stay where you are."

Some recruits are sent to depots, others join their regiments direct: it all depends on the branch of the

## Training the Recruit

Service a man joins ; but whatever his first destination may be, a recruit in ordinary times is sure to find himself in a barrack-room, and in all probability his first distinct taste of army life will come when he has to make his own bed for the night. This is quite a change from anything to which he had been accustomed in civil life, and but for the assistance of some kindly old soldier, it is safe to assume that the youngster would make a sorry mess of the business. The same old soldier is in evidence again soon afterwards when the recruit has drawn his kit, clothing, arms, and equipment. There seems a terrible lot of it, and the youngster is obviously at a loss what to do with it all. But the skilled hand of the old "swaddy" soon straightens it all up, and the recruit is left easy in his mind and quite comfortable. He has—although he may not be conscious of it—received a lesson in something infinitely more important than making a bed or tidying a kit. He has learned something about comradeship, the grand thing which means so much and yet is almost indefinable. Perhaps Kipling has limned it as nearly as can be when he says : "Everything in the Army is common property, except money, and you've only got to ask the next fellow for that."

Our recruit may thank his lucky stars that the days of pipeclay and polish are over. Except his white waist-belt, and a queer fad which ordains that rifle-slings are to be pipeclayed, the recruit will find that the advent of khaki has removed many troubles from

## The British Army

his path. In the comparative yesterday, when each man was bothered in the infantry with a bewildering maze of straps and buckles to keep white and bright respectively, and had even more of the same sort of thing in the cavalry, it was the easiest thing in the world for a man to get into trouble for next to nothing, and many a promising young soldier was ruined in this way. "Dirty on parade" was the favourite "crime" in those days, and cases have been known when the "dirt" was nothing more serious than a speck on the monocle of the inspecting officer.



Lord Roberts.

For some reason or other, possibly on account of national temperament, the British soldier is singularly unresponsive to the appeals of eloquence, which is just as well, as the average British officer, although he can say a few words very much to the point on occasion, is not a conspicuous success when it comes to

sustained flights of oratory. Thereby hangs a good story. During the Napoleonic wars a General commanding a British division, noticing that the French obtained splendid results by exhorting their men immediately before giving battle, issued an order that officers commanding regiments under him were to address their men on a similar plan. The order was not popular, but had to be obeyed, and this is how one tough old Colonel who had seen much war service obeyed it. He



## Colours and Comradeship

paraded his battalion, drew himself up proudly in front of his men, and said : “ The General’s orders are that I am to address you to fill you with enthusiasm for the fight before us. You will now consider yourselves duly addressed and filled with enthusiasm accordingly.”

No doubt the old Colonel understood his men, and every soldier knows that the “ no fuss ” idea is as strong to-day as ever it was in our Service. Perhaps we have gone too far in the direction of killing all show, especially since the universal introduction of khaki.

### CHAPTER III

#### COLOURS AND COMRADESHIP

COLOURS have been left out of our wars for so long that even the average civilian is well aware of the fact that battalions no longer march into action with colours flying—nor is it for a moment suggested that they should—but at the same time it seems rather a pity that the animating influence of colours on active service should be altogether lost. Heroic deeds cluster thick and fast around the colours of our regiments. Just one example of many, taken at random from a military book, may well be inserted here : “ At the battle of Albuera, in 1811, the colours of the Third Buffs were borne by Ensigns Thomas and Walsh. The French had attacked the brigade to which this regiment belonged in great force, and had

## The British Army

captured the colours of two of the regiments; those of the Buffs were not so easily taken. Ensign Thomas was called upon to give up the colours he bore; he answered, 'But with my life.' He was instantly cut down, and the colours snatched from him; but they were soon recovered by the regiment. The other

colour was carried by Ensign Walsh. The staff was broken by a cannon-shot, and Walsh

himself severely wounded. Nevertheless, he tore the flag from the remnants of the staff and thrust it into his bosom, whence, completely saturated with the blood of the heroic boy, it was removed when his wounds were dressed after the battle."

Obviously, we should have to go back to the days of "Brown Bess" and smooth-bore cannon firing spherical balls to reproduce a scene similar to that described above. But that is

Colour Party, Irish Guards.

no reason why the war value of colours should be completely disregarded, and it is worth noting that such eminently practical soldiers as the Japanese made splendid use of colours amid the terrible carnage around Port Arthur. They did not flaunt these proud emblems of a soldier's calling, but before the final





SAVING THE COLOURS AT ALBUERA PAGE 28

## Colours and Comradeship

infantry assault on the crest of Royusan, "The enthusiasm of the bulk of the attacking force, which had been lying in wait behind Namaokayama, and in the valley of 174 Metre Hill, was raised to the highest pitch by a very simple and soldier-like ceremonial, of which the *Times* correspondent makes careful mention. The execution of the attack had been entrusted to Major-General Saito, doubtless in recognition of his brilliant gallantry in the fighting to the eastward on November 26. His command included eight battalions of infantry, and, between one and two p.m., these began to fall in for the attack. As they marched down the little valley leading to the front line of trenches they passed a little group of officers standing on their left, and holding the regimental colours. As each battalion came level with these glorious emblems it was halted, faced to the left, and the word was given to salute. Colours have played a grand part on many a hard-fought field, and not a few are averse from the modern regulation which prevents their being taken into action by the British Army. Surely the noble and inspiring use to which they were put on this momentous occasion is an argument as forcible as any which previous history affords—which is saying a great deal—of the value of colours on the battlefield as a moral factor outweighing the considerations which have banished the colour-party from our own battle formation."

Not only colours, but facings, time-honoured regimental numbers, territorial traditions, and many a dis-

## The British Army

tion which means much to the soldier, have been handled with a heavy hand in our Army. Of late there has been a gratifying tendency to deal with these things in a more sympathetic manner, but much remains to be done before the work of restoration is finished as it should be. For a long period things sacred to the soldier were dealt with as unfeelingly as a worthy grocer weighs out bacon, sometimes for no reason except pure official "cussedness," but more often with the idea of saving a few shillings in the name of "economy." It is both the duty and privilege of a more enlightened age to make what reparation is possible, and official action in this direction would not only tend to improve the fighting value of our Army, but would also provide a recruiting attraction worth more than a passing thought.



Badge of the 95th.

The Service dress and equipment of the British infantryman is in almost every respect an improvement on the past. Khaki is quite good, except that the new khaki overcoat will not keep out so much wet and cold as the old blue cloth pattern did, and it would seem that the saving in weight is rather dearly bought if, after carrying a great-coat for ever on his back, a soldier finds that it falls short of his requirements when wind and weather test it. The new webbing equipment is lighter and easier for the men than the old tangle of leather straps which used to be inflicted on the soldier, and the khaki pack is more workmanlike

## Modern Drill Methods

than any previous pattern. Above all, modern methods of carrying ammunition are far in advance of the old leather pouches ; and, taking him all round, it may be said that the British foot-soldier is now as well equipped for his business as any soldier in the world. Some critics contend that the pack is a mere encumbrance, but infantry of all nations carry it, and it seems to be about the only way of making sure that the soldier always has with him his spare shirt, socks, small kit, and other little necessaries. Still, there is no getting away from the fact that on active service the modern soldier sheds his pack without thought or regret.

### CHAPTER IV

#### MODERN DRILL METHODS

DISCIPLINE, comradeship, esprit de corps, these are the unseen qualities which make a real soldier. It is possible enough to attain an outward semblance of military efficiency which is lamentably deficient in these things, but is, nevertheless, quite impressive on formal parades in peace time. The real business of modern soldiering has precious little connection with the picturesque but hopelessly antiquated notion of arranging soldiers all in a nice straight row, or marching them about on a barrack square in a series of elegant evolutions pretty enough for a ballet. This fancy work is only of value so far as it teaches recruits to move like one man at the word of command. We have no further use for

## The British Army

it in the British Army except for purely ceremonial parades.

Nowadays our drill instructors have to explain things ; they are no longer phonographs endowed with disciplinary powers. It is no use their memorizing chunks of the drill-book and spouting it forth by the yard. They are expected to possess an intelligent comprehension of the real meaning of things military, and to impart their knowledge to the men they have to train. Consequently, instead of squads being shouted at for hours on end, we see little knots of men receiving what amounts to careful individual tuition under ideal open-air conditions. The modern recruit is encouraged to use his brains, to ask questions, and take a human interest in his work, the result aimed at being to make him that ideal fighting man of to-day—the soldier who can render to his superior intelligent and co-operative obedience in the field.

The actual wording of the official drill-book matters very little ; the meaning is the thing, and the tone and method of instruction is rightly regarded as of the utmost importance. It is now realized to the full that it is no use frightening a man if you wish to teach him anything, and instead of working under a constant flow of withering curses and the everlasting shadow of the “clink,” the recruit is taken in hand on much the same lines as a youngster might be who was apprenticed to a capable master who meant to do justice to his charge. The difference is astonishing to men still on the



## Modern Drill Methods

right side of forty who experienced the old order of things.

For instance, in the Aldershot command, from a position which enabled him to see without being seen the writer watched a squad of cavalry recruits at drill. The men were well advanced, almost fit for "passing out," and while doing some parade exercise with the rifle, one of the men happened to drop his weapon. Years ago that man would have been "for it" like a flash. So rapid would his transit have been to the "jigger" that his feet would scarce have touched the ground during the journey, and if the action looked in the least wilful, the punishment would have been almost enough to satisfy Chakra in command of an impi.

What happened at Aldershot was that, without raising his voice, the instructor called out the name of the offending recruit, and said, quite calmly : "That'll do; that's quite enough of you, my lad. Get down into the next squad. Be off with you, and never let me set eyes on you again!"

That was all ; and the youngster picked up his rifle and marched off to the "awkward squad," looking just for all the world like a shamefaced schoolboy sent down several places in his class before all the other



Recruits Drilling.

## The British Army

boys. Just think of it! And this was in the cavalry, where, on the authority of Kipling, "*Colonel 'e swears,*" never mind the drill-sergeant. In departmental corps the same sort of thing was even more marked, and, as one hard-bitten old warrant officer expressed it, "Why, when I joined nearly twenty-five years ago a recruit used to stand in fear and trembling before the last made lance-jack. Now, bless me! why, a boy with two or three months in will stand up and argue the point with *me!*"

Not on a disciplinary point, however, my dear sergeant-major. When it comes to an order it is just as much as ever a case of saying "unto this man go, and he goeth." But on technical points connected with his work a recruit is encouraged to ask and answer questions by his officer in person. He is made to feel that in a professional sense he has to work "with" as well as "under" his officer; and although it is to be feared that some recruits are incapable of appreciating this to the full, yet the results as a whole are intensely interesting and important. The men's eyes are eloquent of the change. Instead of standing like a post and gazing hard at nothing when speaking to an officer or listening to one, a modern soldier is respectful enough in his tone and attitude, but he is alive, and his eyes tell plainly enough that his brain is working all the time. The old paralyzing mortal fear of the officer has gone.

# Officers and Men

## CHAPTER V

### OFFICERS AND MEN

AT this stage it is worth while to pause and take a glance at British Army officers and rank and file soldiers as a whole and in a general sort of way. Apart from their professional qualifications, what manner of men are they? Judging from the manner in which they are frequently criticized, one might think that when they were not saying "haw haw!" our officers were merely strutting about like "gilded popinjays." It is useless to argue about this sort of nonsense. There is a certain public for it, a public which is prepared to swallow it and pay for it, and while this is the case the demand is sure to be met. But to gain an idea of the truth it is worth while to glance at the pen picture of Sir John Moore, handed down to us by the inimitable Napier.



Sir John Moore.

We learn that "Sir John Moore was quite destitute of affected dignity. He entered the society of those under his command as their equal, confident that his vast superiority as a man would at all times raise him above them more than even his great rank could do. He required no external aid. There was among his officers an awe of him, but it was not inspired by any reserve or haughtiness on his part, though I have seen him put down pert and self-sufficient men by a degree

## The British Army

of sarcasm which few could withstand. Those who could were not likely to provoke it.

“His manners were extremely polished and agreeable, and at times even playful. I recollect once standing in the street at Lisbon looking at a very pretty woman who was at a window, when someone gently laid hold of both my ears, saying, in a joking tone, ‘Ah, caitiff, have I caught you? I will put you under arrest. What right have you to look at such an ugly woman as that?’ Turning round, I saw it was the Commander-in-Chief. ‘I will thank you for the punishment, sir,’ said I, ‘if you will place the ugly old woman over me as sentry.’

“Another time, when going from his quarters in the village of Sandgate to the evening parade on the heights of Shorncliffe, the ascent being steep, Moore said to six or eight officers who were with him, ‘Now for a race to the top of the hill,’ and away we all started. Neil Campbell, afterwards with Napoleon at Elba, beat us all, and Moore was second. These are trifling matters, but they mark the unaffected and social feelings of a great man.

“Regard, admiration, and, in very many instances, gratitude for the deep interest he took in their welfare, are the feelings which were entertained for Moore by those who served under his command. There are some characters whom no men liked, and they disliked Moore; but such men had another feeling, which kept them in their proper place—fear. Moore’s



DRILL SQUAD AT ALDERSHOT. PAGE 28



## Officers and Men

nature was unaffected, kind, gentle, benevolent, nor was he roused to severity until provoked by a great want of zeal for the public service, or by great criminality."

This portrait of Moore can be set alongside that of the "gilded popinjay," and any man who knows anything of the British officer can tell which of the two is nearest to life. Not that many reach the standard set by Moore. They do not. Such a character is the exception in any walk of life. But it is safe to assert that the average is much nearer the Moore ideal than the other, and the spirit of the times is all in favour of an extension of this ideal. Slowly but surely we are making progress on the lines laid down by Lord Wolseley, who was the first great soldier to tell British officers that "they must make themselves loved as well as respected. In our intercourse with the rank and file we must make them realize that all our interests are identical, causing the latest-joined recruit to feel that success is of as much real moment to him as it can be to the General. Let us sink as far as possible the respective titles of officers, sergeants and privates, merging them into the one great professional cognomen of soldier, causing all ranks to feel that it is a noble title, of which the General as well as the private may well be proud. Let us give up the phrase 'officer and gentleman,' substituting that of 'soldier' for it. Let



Lord Wolseley.

## The British Army

the word officer be used as seldom as possible, so that the private may really feel that there is no gulf between him and his commander, but that they are merely separated by a ladder, the rungs of which all can equally aspire to mount.

“Study to be familiar without being vulgar, and habit, if not intuition, will soon enable you to be gracious and intimate with your men without any loss of dignity. You must be intimate with your men before they will love you, and they must love you before you can hope to get the most out of them. You should study their prejudices, learn their individual characters, and by a knowledge of their respective sensitiveness guard against wounding their feelings, for in every company there will be men of actual refinement in comparison with others. Strive to raise the majority to a level with that small minority. The officer should take a lively interest in their amusements, encouraging them in the practice of all manly sports. In fine, he should sympathize with their likes and dislikes, their pleasures and annoyances, being ready at all times to listen to their grievances, be they supposed or real, until at last they regard him as one of themselves. For and with such a man they will brave any danger or endure any amount of privation.”

This advice has been taken to heart by British officers as a class to a far greater extent than is generally known, and the result is that no inconsiderable amount



## Officers and Men

of the character which a public-school education alone can give to most men has filtered down to the rank and file. The process has been very rapid indeed of late—it may be that modern educational methods have produced a larger proportion of recruits capable of appreciating the many indefinable things which go to the making of a gentleman—but whatever the cause, the fact is indisputable that the private soldier of to-day speaks and acts like a youngster of good class. The transformation has been so quick and thorough that a long search among the “old hands” is necessary to unearth specimens of the type immortalized by Kipling. The general level of intelligence and refinement is altogether higher, and the tendency is all in the direction of further progress. The relation between this state of affairs and fighting efficiency is altogether satisfactory. The notion that a wild scamp makes the best soldier has been an exploded fallacy for many years, and becomes further removed from fact every day. It only survives in cheap novelettes, where by ancient right the “bad bargain” of the regiment always saves the Colonel’s life, and either dies a glorious death on the spot or lives to marry the Colonel’s daughter. There is no other option for him—he must do one of the two things—and as a rule the odds are in favour of wedding-bells coming in at the finish.



Modern British  
Officer.

## The British Army

In one respect, however, the British soldier has not improved. Apart from his work as a soldier, he is still as helpless as ever. In the Crimea the British troops that stormed the heights of the Alma and stood their ground at Inkerman against six or seven times their number, were the admiration of our chivalrous allies and of every nation in Europe. The manner in which officers and men endured the hardships and privations of the last winter was, perhaps, even more heroic than their conduct in action. Yet, with all their indomitable courage and energy before the foe, and all their fortitude and high bearing, most of them were in some respects very helpless fellows. Few of them could handle a spade or a mattock with any dexterity; fewer still an axe or a saw, a hammer or a trowel. Few of them could even mend their own clothes tolerably, and fewer still could mend their own shoes. They were bad cooks, and all, except the old soldiers, bad hands at even lighting a fire. In short, they could hardly turn their hands to anything except fighting, but that, it must be admitted, they could do second to none in the world.

The same condition of pathetic helplessness has been the bane of our troops in many a campaign since the Crimean, and was much too pronounced in South Africa until wrinkles picked up on service taught the men how to take a reasonable amount of care of their own comfort. This peculiar and deplorable characteristic cannot be a national trait, for our sailors are the

## Officers and Men

handiest of men, and when serving ashore with our troops have often lived well and comfortably when the soldiers were hungry and miserable. Traced to its root, the trouble doubtless originates in the tradition that it is "irregular" to permit the soldier to do anything, except fight or train for fighting, which can possibly be done for him. His meals must be cooked and served by men told off for the job. Properly qualified tradesmen must mend his clothes and boots, and even his washing and mending must be done for him by the wives of his comrades.

There is no great harm in all this. Speaking generally, the system is a good servant without which the life of a soldier would indeed be full of trouble. But it is a bad master when carried to excess, which is the one thing we seem to make a point of doing. Every soldier ought to know how to take care of himself on service, how to cook his own dinner, how to patch clothes, sole boots, and, above all, how to observe those simple rules of hygiene and elementary sanitation which often make all the difference between a live soldier and a dead one.

The Japanese taught the world that much of the wastage of war is largely preventable, provided the individual soldier is educated up to the idea of doing



Soldiers Cooking.

# The British Army

as much as he can to look after himself, and his efforts are supplemented by well-considered plans to keep him supplied with the necessities of life.

## CHAPTER VI

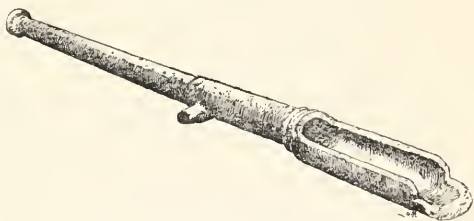
### WITH THE ROYAL ARTILLERY

LEAVING the general qualities inherent to every officer and man in our Army, we will pass to the particular duties of the various branches of the Service. Here the gallant gunners come first, the Royal Regiment of Artillery, according to the Army List—"the right of the line, and the pride of the whole British Army," according to a phrase which few will feel inclined to dispute. As a matter of fact, the garrison gunner, or foot artilleryman, takes the right of any parade of foot-soldiers in the British Army, and the Royal Horse Artillery, when on parade with its guns, takes the right of the whole British Army. Naturally, the gunners are very proud of this distinction. It represents their full share of the honorary glory of war, as they carry no colours, and have no battle honours. Their guns are their colours, and their honours comprise a list of every British battle fought since the introduction of gunpowder, all of which are summed up in the one word "Ubique"—the motto of the regiment—a word which tells that everywhere our army has fought the gunners have been there playing their part like men.

## With the Royal Artillery

Volumes might be written on the growth and development of guns from the time of Cressy up to the present, but we must skip all this, and come straight to a typical modern weapon, the 13-pounder quick-firer, which our dashing horse-gunners have handled with such magnificent skill and bravery at the front. This gun appears to be a tremendously complicated implement of warfare, and for once appearances are not deceptive. It is a steel "wire"-gun, weighing only 6 hundredweight with breech fittings complete, yet from its 3-inch bore it can fire 13-pound shells at the rate of a couple of dozen a minute, without accomplishing anything at all remarkable. Fixed ammunition is used. The complete round consists of a cartridge-case with percussion, primer, charge, shrapnel shell, and fuse.

The cartridge-case is made of solid drawn brass, lacquered black to render it inconspicuous in time of war. It contains a cordite charge weighing nearly a pound and a quarter, which is fired by means of a percussion primer screwed into the base of the cartridge-case. The shrapnel shell is a hollow steel case containing 236 bullets, and has at its base a bursting charge of an ounce and a quarter of fine grain powder. The



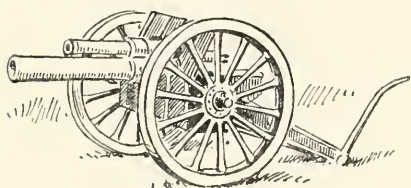
An Early Cast-Iron Breech-Loading Gun found near Dover.

*(In the Artillery Museum, Woolwich.)*

## The British Army

time and percussion fuse is made of aluminium, is fixed at the head of the shell, and can be set to explode the shell at any given range or on impact.

Under war conditions, a couple of seconds is time enough to get off a complete round. In that amazingly short space of time the single-motion breech mechanism is unlocked by one pull on a lever, the gun loaded, and one thrust on the same lever replaces and locks the breech mechanism. Then the trigger, actuated by a direct pull on the firing gear of the carriage, sends the firing-pin into the composition at the base of the



A 13-Pounder Gun.

primer, thus firing the powder in the primer, which in turn explodes the cordite charge, and sends the shell screaming through the air. The shock of discharge sets the fuse in action, and at any desired

range up to over six thousand yards that fuse will send a jet of flame through a brass tube inside the shrapnel shell, ignite the bursting charge, and send the bullets whizzing forth with force enough to prove that a well-timed shrapnel shell is the greatest man-killing projectile known in war.

All this in a couple of seconds, if the gunners are putting in all they know. There are six guns in a battery, and three batteries in a brigade, which means that in two seconds any target up to a range of over six thousand yards could be sprayed with 4,284 bullets





THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF ARTILLERY. PAGE 38



## With the Royal Artillery

from a single brigade of Royal Horse Artillery. Multiply this to any extent, according to the duration of fire and number of guns in action, and some idea can be gained of the "rafale," or "shell-storm," perfected by our very good neighbours across the Channel. The "rafale" is designed to cover large tracts of ground with a hail of shrapnel bullets in such quick time that an exposed enemy could not possibly escape. Guns are directed beforehand, shells fused and timed, and when a suitable target presents itself the guns are loaded and fired as quickly as the detachments can work. Successive waves of devastating shrapnel bullets are thus made to advance or recede over the zone of death, and if given a fair opportunity it is probable that the "rafale" would kill more men in less time than any other device known to land warfare.

In our own service we are more inclined to specialize in the direction of finding a target and hitting it, and our gunners are wonderfully smart at this sort of thing. Quite recently, in one of our artillery practice camps, a single 13-pounder, selected at haphazard by an inspecting officer, located and completely destroyed a moving cavalry target at a range of over two miles; time, thirty seconds; number of rounds fired, fifteen. Smart work this, even for the horse-gunners, who reckon they can move rather faster than the cavalry they have to work with in action. Every man in a battery of Horse Artillery is mounted; they can go all the way with the cavalry—even so far as a charge if needs be.

## The British Army

Napier has immortalized the gunners who charged in the Peninsular War, at the Battle of Fuentes Onoro. We read : "The combat was very unequal, for, by an abuse far too common, so many men had been drawn from the ranks as orderlies to general officers, and for other purposes, that not more than a thousand English troopers were in the field. The French, therefore, with one shock drove in all the cavalry outguards, and, cutting off Ramsay's battery, came sweeping in upon the reserves of horse and the seventh division. But their leading squadrons, approaching in a disorderly manner, were partially checked by the British, and at the same time a great commotion was observed in their main body. Men and horses there closed with confusion and tumult towards one point, a thick dust arose, and loud cries, and the sparking of blades and the flashing of pistols, indicated some extraordinary occurrence. Suddenly the multitude became violently agitated, the mass was rent asunder, and Norman Ramsay burst forth at the head of his battery, his horses breathing fire, stretched like greyhounds along the plain, the guns bounding behind them like things of no weight, and the mounted gunners followed in close career."

The writer saw the present-day representatives of Norman Ramsay's historic battery at work with the 13-pounder, and also on a ceremonial parade on Laffan's Plain. The latter incident is one of the very few episodes in which the soldier of to-day is shown in

## With the Royal Artillery

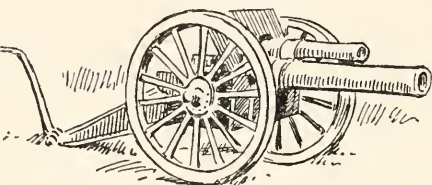
full-dress uniform ; and when the battery arrived and began to manœuvre the scene was indeed one of the most stirring and picturesque the British Army can show. First a slow and stately movement which enabled the eye to revel in glittering gold lace, bright yellow braid, crimson busby bags, white plumes, and the play of light on glistening steel as, mounted on magnificent horses, the battery passed with all the pomp and ceremony of war as our forefathers knew it ; dragging behind the squat 13-pounders, as ugly as only modern weapons of precision can be, to serve as a reminder of war as it is.

A sharp word of command, a ringing call from the trumpeter, and in a twinkling of an eye the battery has adopted a fresh formation, and with a jingle of steel and champing of bits is away in a line which could not be straighter if a ruler were placed over the gun-muzzles. At last comes the gallop past, and men, horses and guns surge on like a living avalanche. The pace is so terrific that the very earth seems to tremble under the hoofs of the horses, and the guns and limbers trundle along behind like toys. It seems impossible that such a wild welter of movement, almost passionate in its amazing swiftness, could be under perfect control, yet the guns flit past in exquisite line, and intervals are kept as if each gun were racing past in strings.

It must not be thought that the 13-pounder quick-firer exhausts the armament of the Royal Regiment of Artillery. The 18-pounder, a big brother of

## The British Army

the Royal Horse gun, is next in point of "seniority," as it is the weapon of the Royal Field Artillery. It is a heavier gun, more powerful, and as the gunners are



An 18-Pounder Gun.

not provided with horses, their fighting weight has to be added to the load behind the gun-teams. This by all the laws of war should make the Field Artillery much slower in manœuv-

ring than the Horse, but it is an article of faith with every field gunner and driver that on this point the law regarding things military is a "hass." Besides the 18-pounder, the Field Artillery have the 5-inch howitzer. A curious, stumpy weapon to look at is this howitzer. All howitzers are, for that matter—they appear as if someone had started to make a gun and then thought better of it. The howitzer "barks" most unpleasantly—its short body seems to cough out shells with a more objectionable noise than even the ear-splitting crack of a quick-firer—and its bite is every bit as bad as its bark.

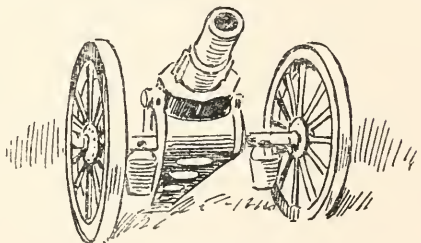
Reduced to the barest non-technical terms, the special business of the howitzer is to fire high in the air and drop shrapnel bullets or high explosives down on an enemy. Handling howitzers in action is very cunning work. The guns take up a snug position behind a hill, trained observers sight the target, the range is worked out, and in remarkably quick time the

## With the Royal Artillery

gunners, who cannot see what they are firing at, are peppering their target with amazing accuracy.

Howitzers have achieved a great deal of prominence owing to the employment by the Germans of weapons of this type of immense calibre, some of them so large that they have to be transported in sections on account of their enormous weight. Really, there is nothing so very new in all this. As far back as the Crimean War we constructed a 36-inch mortar on exactly the same principle, but the weapon was such a failure that it never left Woolwich Arsenal. No doubt the idea has been improved upon since, and the gigantic howitzers used by Germany may be reckoned the most formidable armament ever brought into siege warfare. Against forts they are powerful enough to batter down any opposition offered by even the strongest permanent works. But this is the

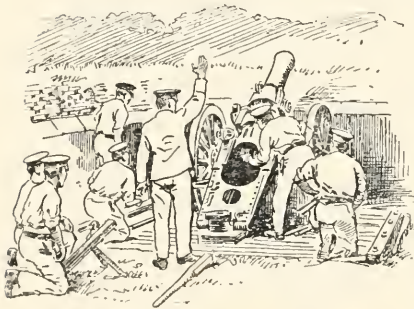
limit of their value. In the field they are not worth their carriage, never mind their cost. Against troops clear of a massive fortress these great howitzers are about as useful as a punt-gun would be to a man trying to destroy mosquitoes. They must have a fixed target worthy of their calibre. If this is not available, any commander would gladly exchange them for half their weight in smaller and handier weapons and ammunition.



A Howitzer.

## The British Army

Our Royal Garrison Artillery comes next, and of late this branch has become almost the Cinderella of the Service. Not so many years ago, when Gordon was building the Thames Forts during his period of service at Gravesend, and we were erecting forts all over the place, even as our ancestors specialized in martello-towers, the Garrison Artillery, as it was then, had a truly stupendous armament. Muzzle-loaders of all types, from "converted" sixty-fours up to monsters of eighty and more tons, poked their ugly muzzles out



R.G.A. at Howitzer Drill.

of embrasures and casements from Tilbury to Esquimalt. Breech-loaders came next, and came quickly, and grew apace, until the garrison gunners as well as the Royal Navy handled the 17.25 guns, each weighing a hundred and ten tons, and throwing a shell tipping the scale at a couple of thousand pounds. Monstrous, ungainly weapons they were, and their vast weight undoubtedly hastened the ill-fated *Victoria* to her doom.

Then came a change. Guns decreased in size, but increased tremendously in handiness and hitting power, until the question began to be asked whether any modern naval commander would be mad enough to make a deliberate attack in full force on forts packed

## With the Royal Artillery

with powerful guns he could not hope to silence, and protected by mine-fields into the bargain. Gradually the conviction grew that the bombardment of Alexandria was a performance not in the least likely to be encored, unless an Admiral had an abundance of *Condors* he was anxious to be "well done" with, and the "raid" idea became paramount. This meant that instead of designing forts with the idea of knocking a hostile fleet to pieces, fixed defences were arranged to shatter torpedo craft and light cruisers, and at the same time to leave nasty marks on bigger craft if any chanced to come within range. Rapidity of fire allied to the utmost accuracy became the ideal, which has now gained so much ground that a 9.2 gun firing a 232-pound shell is practically the heaviest weapon used by garrison gunners, and the crack of the quick-firer instead of the boom of the big gun is the dominant note of their method of waging war. It is quick work now—very, very quick indeed—the idea being to make the most of the few fleeting seconds in which a searchlight casts its white gleam on a racing torpedo-boat anxious to emulate the deeds of the Japanese torpedo craft at Port Arthur.

It is worth recalling what these boats did, if only to show what a tremendous responsibility rests on the Royal Garrison Artillery. In half an hour the "Choosers of the Slain" completed their deadly work, leaving the battleships *Tsarevitch* and *Retvisan*, with the cruiser *Pallada*, hulled, holed, and useless, within

## The British Army

easy range of the guns of one of the finest fortresses in the world. This was the midnight declaration of war, for the saucy shot fired by the old *Koreitz* at Chemulpo made no difference either way ; and it is perfectly true that during the something less than ten years which have passed since that daring torpedo raid into Port Arthur, our Garrison Artillery has been trained mainly, if not solely, with the intention of dealing with a similar "declaration of hostilities." Exactly what records have been accomplished the writer does not propose to divulge, but the taxpayer may possibly sleep a little sounder "o' nights" when he learns that behind his magnificent Navy the gunners in his forts can loose off thirty shots per minute from 12-pounders, fifteen from 6-inch guns, each projectile weighing 100 pounds ; and can let drive with the 9.2 to such purpose that three of its 232-pound shells are in the air at once at long range—two shells actually following the first before it has reached its target. These figures are no records, not by a long way—they are just useful performances, and the most wonderful thing of all is that the fire is as accurate as it is rapid.

Before leaving this branch of the Service it should be noted that the garrison gunners handle the heaviest gun taken on service with our field army. This is the 60-pounder, the latest type of "Long Tom." Curiously enough, the garrison gunners are also in charge of the smallest gun we take with us on active service. This, now the "pom-pom" has gone,



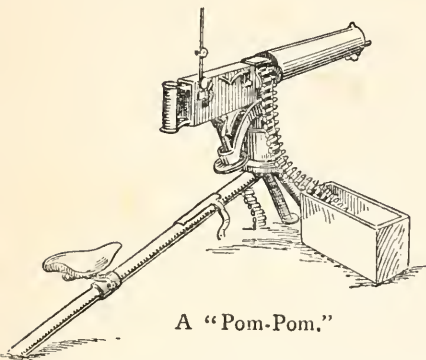


CHARGE OF THE 9TH LANCERS, AUGUST 24, 1914



## With the Royal Artillery

is the mountain gun, the gun "which takes in two bits," as Kipling expresses it. He also tells us that



A "Pom-Pom."

"it's only the pick of the regiment what can handle the little pets;" and it must be admitted that it would be difficult indeed to find a finer body of men than the mountain gunners. We never see

them at home, as they serve entirely abroad, mostly in India.

## CHAPTER VII

### CAVALRY TRAINING AND TRADITIONS

FROM artillery to cavalry is an easy step, and at Aldershot the writer saw the whole process of making a cavalryman from the arrival of the recruit at the barrack gates to the charge of a war squadron of perfectly trained soldiers. Here again the improvement in instructional methods was most marked. In one riding-school we saw a large mirror fixed to the wall with the idea of showing recruits what they really looked like. The mirror happened to be cracked, and we were gravely informed that a steady old troop-horse had done the damage on purpose—it got so sick of seeing itself trotting around with awkward recruits on its back. In this distinguished regiment we spent

## The British Army

many interesting days, and the wooden horse was as much in evidence as the same strain was at the siege of Troy. Recruits were taught all the elements of their work on the wooden mounts, which were manipulated to produce the effect of a horse in motion. In this manner men were taught so much that by the time they were introduced to the real live animal a very few lessons sufficed to transform them into efficient horsemen. The system is extremely ingenious, including even a method of teaching men how to avoid spoiling the mouth of a horse by means of an arrangement of steel springs fitted over a barrack-room form. Various riding exercises without reins are taught on the dummy, and in due course the same wooden mount is utilized to instruct the recruit in the proper management of reins. The whole system is very sound and sensible. It trains men without putting a lot of extra and rough work on the horses, and trains them surprisingly well into the bargain. It saves an enormous amount of time, too, as young soldiers of some six months' service were seen riding and jumping with an amount of ease and confidence a man seldom acquired until he put up a badge under the old system. A "badge," it is necessary to explain, is the decoration bestowed on a private soldier after two years' service with good conduct.

If anyone is inclined to jeer at the steed of timber, a few minutes on the back of one will soon prove just how far his scorn is backed by fact—that is, of course,

## Cavalry Training and Traditions

if he survives the ordeal. Unless he is a fair horseman, quite a respectable "toss" can be arranged for him off the wooden horse without very much trouble. Mounted drill with arms of every description can be carried out on the wooden dummy, as well as mounting, dismounting, vaulting into the saddle, and the various leg and body exercises which give the cavalryman complete control of the living horse. The sword exercise is of particular value. It shows how the old spectacular "cuts" have gone for ever, and that when it comes to cold steel the modern British cavalryman is taught to use the quick and deadly "point." The lance, too, is very much in evidence during the preliminary training of the mounted soldier on the steed from the carpenter's shop. After the wooden mount, the riding-school, and "jumps" near barracks, the cavalry soldier is passed on to more advanced work with his unit in the field. By far the most spectacular portion of this work is the "charge"—that supreme moment when dense lines of horsemen dash forward with drawn swords or pointed lances to change defeat into rout, to give that final thrust from which no army ever recovers.

But the opportunity for a cavalry charge comes at comparatively rare intervals. The main business of cavalry of to-day is to form a screen in front of a large body of other troops, to act as the eyes of an army, to scout and reconnoitre far in advance or wide out on the flanks, to feint or fight as occasion demands, to deceive the enemy, to snap up advanced posts

## The British Army

worth holding, and always to keep their own General constantly in touch with their progress and work. Ever watchful and alert, constantly moving, and always ready to grasp and make full use of the endless changes of war which can be turned to their advantage and that of the army they are in touch with, modern cavalry has work to do which makes a full call on the powers and endurance of both man and beast.

While watching manœuvres from a car shortly before the war, we were never clear of the ubiquitous cavalry. Silent horsemen they were, and so well concealed that the great grey car, running smoothly and well at slow speed, spinning along almost as noiselessly as a gyroscope, revealed a wonderful series of surprise pictures as we felt our way through a bewildering network of byways which seemed to lead to no highway. Nothing would be visible from the front of the car, and then, rounding a bend, we would light on a cavalry scout half-embedded in foliage, and so well concealed that we were right alongside him before we saw man or horse. Further on, a horse walked slowly close to a covering hedge while its rider studied a map. Many such figures were passed. All had maps, and were very busy with them. Sometimes, when the hedge was too low to give cover to a mounted man, a led-horse told that these



Motor Scout.

## Cavalry Training and Traditions

cavalry meant to see without being seen. At intervals, where the cover was thick and good, mounted men halted and used their field-glasses, moving so little that they looked like khaki statuettes mounted on carved horses. Every now and then an arm waved a cautious signal, and, like an electric shock, the message passed, it needs be, no farther than the next man, or if of sufficient import, it was caught up and flashed off to the General miles away in a few seconds. Every man seemed to feel that the safety of an army rested on him, and as we saw those earnest horsemen pushing their silent and invisible way through difficult and enclosed country, the sight may not have been magnificent, but one felt that it was as near war as could be.

Modern war, that is. Those cavalry, the direct descendants of gallant swordsmen who never had to "reason why," knew just what they were doing and why they were doing it. They knew their position to an inch, and understood their maps so well that a trooper selected at haphazard told us in a few lucid sentences how to get our car out of the maze and on to a high-road. Yet the men who rode in the Balaclava charge were trained in accordance with "Cavalry Regulations," which never mention a map from cover to cover, say no word of "scouts," and are artless enough to state that when cavalry are passing through villages where there is a chance "of the enemy having concealed a party of infantry in the houses, the front rank should file along one side of the street, and the

## The British Army

rear rank along the other, each watching the windows on the opposite side."

We have travelled far indeed since the Crimean period—so far that from the training of the recruit to the utilization of the finished cavalryman there is nothing left of the old order of things. The recruit, for many years after the Crimea, began his instruction on a horse bridled and saddled. Now, after the wooden horse, the recruit's first lessons on the real animal are without reins or stirrups. And when he has learned to ride he is no longer taught to be the specialist in cold steel his predecessors were. As Major May reminded us nearly twenty years ago in "Guns and Cavalry":



A Cavalry  
Sword.

"The lance and sword, what are they but the weapons of chivalry? the arms of Cœur de Lion and of Saladin? They are no more deadly now than they ever were, nor are the men who wield them presumably more powerful or skilful in handling them than were those that Seydlitz or Ziethen led. It is a very different matter, however, where firearms are concerned. Here magazine rifles have replaced flint-locks, ranges have increased tenfold, while rapidity and accuracy of fire have equally advanced." Immediately after the Boer War these facts were so patent that the lance was temporarily abolished

except for ceremonial parades, and the sword found such small favour that our cavalry threatened to



## Our "Astonishing Infantry"

develop into a species of glorified mounted infantry. During the last few years, however, although the "saddle-emptying" power of machine-guns, quick-firing artillery, and magazine rifles has always been kept well in mind, yet there is a tendency to put a glint of naked steel into the work of cavalry, to give the horsemen a chance to get a charge well home when modern warfare offers them an opportunity.

### CHAPTER VIII

#### OUR "ASTONISHING INFANTRY"

EXCEPT a passing reference to barrack-square drill, nothing has been said of our "astonishing infantry." Truth to tell, the subject is a difficult one to tackle in a work of this size. The modern infantryman is the direct descendant of the archers and pikemen of old, but since the introduction of gunpowder and a standing army he has changed tremendously in many respects; in others he remains much about the same as ever. The British infantryman of to-day is every bit as indifferent to everything except the job before him as his glorious ancestors were when they walked over opposing cavalry at Minden "by mistake." The cavalry has its "little ways," concerning which Captain Nolan might have said much if a cannon-ball had not taken off his head; the gunners and sappers are rather apt to consider that as representatives of "armed science" a General ought to handle them with the con-

## The British Army

sideration due to experts who have nothing to learn about their own particular business ; but the good old infantry just trudges on, fights on, grumbles on, never beaten, never done, and never asking for anything more than an order which has to be obeyed. But although the spirit of our infantry has not changed (and who would wish to change it who knows anything of his country's history?), yet in every other respect there is no comparison between the old and the new.

For centuries the British soldier in general, and the infantryman in particular, was nothing more than a picturesque pawn moved in accordance with accepted rules of war, which, unless a Marlborough or a Wellington was in command, seldom led to decisive results, and often produced nothing but much marching and counter-marching without even the beginning of a fight. There is a story of an officer, educated under this system, who on one occasion is said to have exclaimed : " I do not like all this moving about ; I should not wonder if some day or other we were to fall in with the enemy." And when they did " fall in with an enemy," the battle ran by rote. Generals, with a few brilliant exceptions, were seldom or never guilty of any ideas. Great actions were fought on stereotyped lines without any attempt at adaption to meet the requirements of a particular battle, and when the inevitable muddle resulted, nothing but the inherent pluck and bravery of the private soldier saved





MACHINE GUNS IN ACTION PAGE 59

## Our "Astonishing Infantry"

the day many a time and oft. A big book, and a vastly interesting one, could be written on "battles won in spite of Generals," and a close study of our military history compels the conclusion that until this volume is written full justice will never be done to the British infantryman and the regimental officers who fought and died with him.

The influence of a military system which did not encourage even Generals to think, pressed with a heavy hand on the training of the infantry soldiers. Every possible point, from the position of the individual soldier to the movement of a battalion, was reduced to printed rules and fearful and wonderful diagrams which abound in military works, official and unofficial, from the sixteenth century until a date much more recent than might well have been. Since the Boer War, however, there has been a complete and gratifying transformation. The British Army has been born again during the last ten years, and as regards its military work pure and simple, is alert and progressive enough to satisfy any reasonable critic.

The rule is at present: "When the soldier has been trained in close and extended order drill, has learned the signals, and is able to use his rifle and bayonet, the section will be trained in battle formations both by day and by night.

"Company commanders will prepare a general programme for the whole course of training in field operations with regard to the ground at their disposal.

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Each day's work will be carefully considered with a view to impressing certain lessons.

“The men are to be trained to use their intelligence and initiative, to use their eyes and ears, and to be alert.

“In addition to the methods of extending described in extended order drill, rough-and-ready expedients will be practised in order to form a fighting front quickly in any direction from any formation. The men should be taught to act on such commands as ‘Line that bank,’ ‘Man by man extend along that hedge,’ and so on.

“Instruction will also be given in the various methods of advancing under different conditions of fire and ground, such as rushes supported by the fire of a portion of the section, advancing man by man, crawling, and so on, the conditions under which these various methods should be employed being explained, while insisting on the true object of every advance—namely, to close with the enemy. In every method of advance the importance of mutual support must be emphasized from the first.”

The bare idea of extemporizing words of command to meet with minor tactical developments in a sensible manner is enough to make the worthy Dundas turn in his grave, and mention of the bayonet serves to bring to mind the fact that the picturesque “bayonet exercise,” the beloved “pokey drill” of generations of inspecting Generals, is now a thing of the past. Instead, they teach the infantry soldier a decidedly practical

# Weapons of Our Infantry

business known as "bayonet fighting," some of the latest developments of which, as illustrated in the Head-quarter Gymnasium at Aldershot, were realistic enough in their design and intention to convey with a shudder a vivid idea of what hand-to-hand fighting really means at the point of the bayonet. This is typical of everything the writer saw at Aldershot. On every side there was a marked disposition to cut all non-essentials and arrive at the maximum of war efficiency by the shortest possible route.

## CHAPTER IX

### WEAPONS OF OUR INFANTRY

As regards arms, the rifle, bayonet, and machine-gun fall to the share of the infantry. For the benefit of the non-technical reader it is as well to explain that the machine-gun means the maxim only. The "pom-pom" is not included, in fact it has been altogether withdrawn from the units of our field Army, but similar weapons form part of the armament of some Continental armies.

The Service machine-gun is the .303 maxim, which fires the ordinary rifle cartridge. It will deliver a stream of bullets at the rate of six hundred rounds a minute. The gun may be considered as divided into two portions—the non-recoiling and the recoiling. It is worked automatically by two forces—the explosion of the charge which forces the recoiling portion back-

## The British Army

wards, and a strong spring which carries it forward. By means of extremely ingenious mechanism the shock of recoil is utilized to load the gun again and again as fast as it can be fired, and such is the heat generated by the rapidity of fire that to keep the barrel cool it is completely surrounded by a barrel casing of gun-metal holding about seven pints of water. The water in the barrel-casing begins to boil when the gun has fired about six hundred rounds as quickly as possible. After this, if the firing is continued, the amount of water evaporated is about one and a half pints for each thousand rounds. When the barrel casing is filled with water about two thousand rounds may be fired without replenishing, but this depends upon the rapidity with which the gun is fired. It is more than a little strange that one of the primary needs of life should be so essential to the working of one of the deadliest instruments of warfare ever invented, yet such is indeed the fact, as any attempt at rapid fire without water in the barrel casing would soon generate heat enough to melt the bullets in the barrel and simply choke the gun. Without water, the only thing to do would be to fire one bullet at a time at intervals. This can be done from a maxim just as easily as from an ordinary rifle—it is not until the double button is pressed that the gun fires automatically.

Its extreme handiness makes the maxim, weight for weight, perhaps the most effective man-killing weapon in existence. Well-timed shrapnel, burst just where an



## Weapons of Our Infantry

enemy would rather not meet with it, is more fatal, but a single howitzer or field-gun which can fire shrapnel weighs more than many maxims. To be exact, a 13-pounder quick-firer, the lightest ordnance we have capable of firing shrapnel, mountain-guns excepted, weighs 6 hundredweight. A maxim weighs 60 pounds, and a simple calculation shows that eleven maxims can be put in the scale against one 13-pounder and still have a little in hand. This lightness enables the maxim to go anywhere with troops in the field. It can be taken along roads on wheels, across country on pack-animals, or, if needs be, shouldered by a single soldier right up into the firing line. There is scarcely a position from which it cannot be fired. Over parapets, or but slightly raised from the ground, makes no difference to the maxim, and if it happens to be located it can be moved like a flash out of danger. But it is no easy matter to find a maxim in action—if it is at all well concealed, it needs a lucky shot to silence it.

The weak point of the maxim is that its mechanism is liable to "regrettable incidents." When at Hythe, the writer was lucky enough to see an actual "jam," caused by a split cartridge-case. Something less than three seconds by a stop-watch was time enough for the experts at the School of Musketry to remove the fault and carry on with the firing. This was most creditable, but it would be indeed rash to accept it as any criterion of what would be likely to happen on active service if

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“something went wrong with the works” of a maxim under fire. Then, unless the detachment was very well trained and thoroughly understood the little spit-fire, that gun would have nothing more to say in the fight. The maxim-gun is, above all things, essentially the weapon of soldiers who know their business. In the hands of amateurs, it is little more than a noisy plaything capable of wasting more valuable ammunition than enough.

But when it does get going against a favourable target, even a single maxim-gun can perform such tremendous execution that its drawbacks sink to comparative insignificance. Ranging up to 2,900 yards, although most field practices are carried out between ranges of 600 and 1,200 yards, machine-guns can pour forth an intensity of fire which is simply appalling. The maximum rate of fire has already been given, and what is expected as a matter of course may be gathered from the latest official manual, which states that when observation practice is carried out at a range of from 900 to 1,200 yards there is “no limit” as regards time, but it is to be “at a rate of at least 250 rounds a minute.” It is difficult to find words to describe what this fire really means. It recalls memories of a pitiless hail of lead swishing through the air, scrunching into the butts, throwing up geyser-like jets of sand and shingle, and playing a perfect devil’s tattoo on the targets. It was so quick, so swift, so much death packed into so little time, and so

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perfectly under control, that the jet of lead, after flickering a withering fire over a number of targets, sped back to pick off one or two left standing on a flank. I saw nothing quite like it again. Such a ceaseless flow of devastation seemed scarcely human in its grim intensity. It was a sight which laid bare the heart of war, and left us with a clear understanding of the reason why cover and concealment play such an important part in modern warfare.

The force behind a modern bullet gives it a muzzle velocity of very nearly two thousand five hundred feet per second, and a penetration which enables rifle-fire to knock a hole clean through a brick wall. A yard of soft wood, a couple of feet of oak, or four to five feet of clay, cannot resist the impact of a bullet from our Service rifles. Shingle stops a bullet better than any other material likely to be ready to hand—six inches of it will give protection. A foot of chalk, when freshly excavated, also constitutes a formidable obstacle. But at least a yard of earth is wanted, and that must not be packed tight, as ramming earth reduces its resisting power. Such penetrative power appears absolutely irresistible; it seems inconceivable that flesh and blood could stand up against it. Yet by one of the strange ironies of war the very power of modern rifle-fire has often defeated its main object—namely, to stop an enemy. In theory there is no particular need to kill anybody in war—it is only necessary to stop a foeman from reaching a certain

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point ; but he *must* be stopped, and ever since war began much killing has been incidental to the stopping. But modern high-velocity small-bore bullets failed to stop a man unless they struck a vital spot. They often drilled holes clean through flesh, and even bones, without stopping the man hit, and this tendency became so pronounced that the “dum-dum” bullet, designed to spread after impact, was perfected on purpose to stop a savage rush. Now, however, the latest type of bullet is constructed on a principle which gives it a pronounced liability to turn immediately after impact,

thus ploughing its way sideways through its living target and displaying a stopping power as great as can be desired.

Turning to the rifle, which is *par excellence* the weapon of our infantry, we enter upon a subject of the utmost interest. The rifleman of to-day is the direct descendant of those mighty archers of old who made the name of an English Bowman feared even by mail-clad knights. His history rightly begins with the arquebus and similar weapons which heralded the end of the age of mail-clad chivalry.

“Murthering engines from the pit of hell,” they were called, and knights of old loved them not. Even the incomparable Bayard spared no prisoners



A Soldier of the Time of James I. armed with an Arquebus.



BAYONET CHARGE OF THE LONDON SCOTTISH AT MESSINES, HALLOWE'EN 1914. PAGE 74



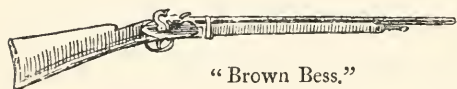
## Weapons of Our Infantry

who used "villainous saltpetre," and by way of poetic justice he was killed by a stone fired into his back by one of those whom he "slew and spared not." Gradually cumbrous old firearms discharged from a rest gave way to shoulder guns of all kinds, and the invention of the flint-lock marked a new era of improvement. After this, however, the musket remained unchanged in its essentials for a very long time. Rifling, the percussion-cap, and breech-loading, are all comparatively recent. Magazine-fire is the latest development of all; but it is impossible to glance through the history of projectile weapons of war without being struck by the anticipation of many modern inventions, especially as regards breech-loading. Perhaps our forefathers considered the rate of fire rapid enough for the age in which they lived, and it must be admitted that it was surprisingly high. Writing in 1768, old Thomas Simes says: "Drill-sergeants and corporals are to take particular care of their squads to teach the recruits how to fix their flints so as to procure the most fire, to cause the recruits to be steady and silent under arms, and that they hold up their heads and carry their arms well. Great attention must be had in the instructing of recruits how to take aim, and that they properly adjust their ball. No recruit to be dismissed from the drill till he is so expert with his firelock as to load and fire fifteen times in three minutes and three-quarters."

It may be that drilling under the shadow of the

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triangle and "cat" was the most approved method of teaching the soldier how to shoot well and quickly in 1768, and the system appears to have worked well enough, except that it occasionally induced men to shoot their own officers from behind on active service. Progress was very slow as regards weapons of a new and improved type, and when the old "Brown Bess" carried our "astonishing infantry" triumphantly victorious through the Peninsular War right up to the "crowning victory" of Waterloo, the pattern became so stereotyped, the dear old smooth-bore became such a fetish, that many of our troops landed in the Crimea



"Brown Bess."

with it, and the Minie rifle was served out at the front as an experiment in face of much

discouragement from officers of the old school.

Two delusions, both supported by the Duke of Wellington and many other influential officers, did much to retard the introduction of improved firearms into our Service. One was that the British infantryman was too much of a fool to be trusted with anything more delicate and complicated than the "Brown Bess"; the other that he was too much of a scoundrel to be taught anything or trusted anywhere unless the "cat" was for ever dangling over his bare back.

The evolution of the rifle and its bullet is full of quaint and interesting points. The rifle did not come



## Weapons of Our Infantry

into use until many years after the discovery of gunpowder and the invention of firearms. Rifles are said to have been used at Hamburg as early as 1498, but the first mention of the grooved barrel which can be considered authentic dates the invention back to 1567, nearly three-quarters of a century later. It was introduced by a German mechanic, who thought it would give a greater facility in loading, and it was found not merely to effect that object, but to steady the ball, and thus produce greater accuracy of fire. Early in the next century a gunsmith of Nuremberg gave the groove a spiral direction, and made the ball larger than the bore, but of metal which enabled the ridge of the groove to penetrate it; and thus it could be forced down upon the charge of powder, acquiring greater impetus and force when projected. The theory of the rifle was thus completed, all other improvements being only in the practical details. Soon after its invention the rifle was partially introduced into the Austrian Army, and in the Thirty Years' and Seven Years' Wars attempts were made to train the cavalry to the use of it, and make them do the duty of both horse and foot soldiers. This plan, "excellent," as Sir Charles Shaw says, "in theory, failed in practice." The rifle did not become a Prussian weapon until the time of Frederick the Great. In his wars with Austria, that monarch found the rifle gave the enemy such an advantage that he made trained riflemen a part of his force. In most of the other countries of Europe the rifle was

## The British Army

adopted as an auxiliary arm, the great body of troops carrying the matchlock.

In 1635 a patent was taken out for making rifles in England. In the first half of the next century Benjamin Robins, a gunsmith, who died in 1751, made an alteration in the centre of gravity in the rifle by placing it nearer the forepart, and he also made the bullets oval instead of round. He discovered the true theory of the rifle: "That the spinning of a rifle ball, like the rotation of an arrow, kept the axis of either in the same direction throughout their flight, and, to a great extent, prevented the irregularities caused by the inequalities in the substance of the bullet when driven from a shotgun or musket." But, strangely enough, Robins, though by far the ablest writer on projectiles of his own and many succeeding generations, exercised but a slight influence on his contemporaries. The Government of his day was not moved by his representations, or convinced by his theory. The Ministers of that day were slow in adopting improvements, a common failing of Ministers as a body, and riflemen were unknown among English troops until the necessity for them was made evident in the American War. The rifle was necessary to the existence of the backwoodsmen. Practice made them excellent shots, and when the Colonial irregulars were able to obtain suitable cover, regular troops could not stand before them. After a time foreign aid was resorted to. Hessian, Hanoverian, and Danish riflemen were engaged to serve against the revolted

## Weapons of Our Infantry

colonists; and it was not until upwards of ten years after the independence of America was recognized that the first English rifle regiment was formed. In 1794 the Government established the 60th Battalion of Rifles, which was called the Royal American Regiment. Our first riflemen carried a mallet, with which to hammer down the ball, and the rifleman was so long in loading that it was necessary that red-coats should be near that he might take refuge behind them while he loaded.

On the Continent, and in England, riflemen, or sharpshooters, long continued only the minor appendages of an army. This may well be wondered at, when the efficiency and destructiveness of the rifle were so manifest and generally known. Not only in the American War of Independence, but also in the repeated contests which the Tyrolese had with their invaders, the deadly accuracy of the rifle was exhibited in actual warfare. In the English Army, after 1794, there were corps of sharpshooters; each regiment had a light company attached to it, who were disciplined and trained as skirmishers, and after 1803 there were a few corps of rifle volunteers. This was the sum total of progress with the rifle in our land forces up to that date.

The two-grooved rifle in use at that time was by no means perfect, and its official neglect was principally owing to defects in the construction of the weapon which were thought to render it inapplicable to the requirements of practical warfare. Subsequent to the peace of 1815 various attempts were made to improve

## The British Army

the weapon, and about a century after the death of Robins, rifles on his principle were constructed by order of our Board of Ordnance. Soon after that period, the Minie, the Enfield, and the Whitworth rifles became formidable weapons in the hands of skilled marksmen, and the long reign of the "Brown Bess" type of firearm was a thing of the past.

When the rifle supplanted the smoothbore came the fight for breech-loading, and a glance back at the power and argument opposed to every change makes one almost wonder that the British soldier is not still armed with the "Brown Bess" or the much-vaunted "percussion musket of 1842." This old weapon weighed, with its bayonet, nearly eleven and a half pounds, and with bayonet complete was just over six feet in length. Its great advantage lay in the stopping power of the solid ounce of lead it threw. When the old round musket-ball did hit anything, it stopped it, or Colin Campbell would never have repelled Russian cavalry with his immortal "thin red line" of Highlanders "two deep." Its length, too, was useful when it came to hand-to-hand fighting, and it would seem that the old triangular pattern bayonet was made of better stuff than some of more recent date. At any rate, we do not find complaints of bayonets buckling and breaking in the Napoleonic wars or the Crimea, but we heard more than enough of this sort of thing in the Soudan.

In every other respect, however, the difference between the "Brown Bess" and a modern rifle is like

## Weapons of Our Infantry

comparing a stage-coach with an aeroplane. The rifle of to-day is capable of delivering twenty-eight rounds of aimed fire in a minute. Years ago, when an infantryman wished to stand a reasonable chance of hitting a human target at two hundred and fifty yards range, he had to take aim at "a point twice the height of a man above the body," to quote an official manual of the period. Now, the trajectory of a magazine rifle is so flat that, with the latest type of bullet up to six hundred yards range, there is not enough curve in the flight of the bullet to render any alteration in the back-sight necessary, and it may be taken for granted that at any point during its flight over this distance the bullet will strike a man, provided aim is taken at the ground line. In other words, six hundred yards is to all intents and purposes point-blank range for our "short" rifle with the new bullet. This bullet is made on scientific principles, and the following description of its manufacture will interest those who may imagine that rifle bullets are just pieces of lead of the required shape. The bullet is a compound, consisting of a core in two parts—the front portion being an alloy of aluminium 90 per cent., zinc 10 per cent., or pure aluminium, and the rear portion being an alloy of 98 per cent. lead, 2 per cent. antimony. The whole is enclosed in an envelope of 80 per cent. copper and 20 per cent. nickel. As many as 6,000 bullets of this type can be fired from a Service rifle without wearing the weapon out to an extent which renders it unreliable.

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A very slight paraphrase of the latest drill-book tells all that need be said of the manner in which our soldiers are taught to handle their rifles. Instructors teach by force of example rather than by word or mouth, and must be careful to refrain from any form of comment which may discourage young soldiers. Words of command are seldom required except in collective firing instruction, all motions of firing being performed independently, and each man being required to use his own judgment as much as possible.

In the early part of the training, squads do not, as a rule, consist of more than seven men, who are assembled round the instructor in a semicircle. The instructor



Recruits at Aiming Drill.

explains the uses of the different firing positions, and illustrates them to the squad. Recruits then practise the motions separately until able to combine them, and assume each position rapidly and without restraint. Next, the position

of each individual is corrected in turn, and the regulation position may be varied if physical characteristics render them unsuitable in any case. The firing rest is frequently employed in early instruction to enable the recruit to support his rifle and rest his muscles, whilst the instructor corrects faults in position.

## Weapons of Our Infantry

Before he is permitted to even practise snapping, the recruit is given several lessons in the correct way of pressing the trigger. In order that he may learn from experience the pressure required, the recruit is directed to place his forefinger under that of the instructor, but without exercising pressure, whilst the instructor carries out the motion. Then the soldier places his finger over that of the instructor and exerts the pressure. Finally, the soldier himself presses the trigger, while the instructor uses the aim corrector. Special care is taken that the breathing is restrained while pressing the trigger. So the training proceeds, always thorough and interesting, until sights are mastered, and a working knowledge gained of what allowance to make for varying winds. All the time, the importance of cover is never overlooked. The value of cover from view and means of concealment afforded by small folds in the ground, or even a few tufts of grass, are illustrated, and the tendency to attract attention by exaggerated movements of the head, arms, or rifle, in loading and aiming, is pointed out and checked. Practice with ball-cartridge comes at last, and the result of the training is the production of an abundance of useful marksmen able to get off their fifteen rounds a minute with accuracy at decisive ranges. Some fall below this standard, others exceed it. Natural aptitude is doubtless the deciding factor, and is even more pronounced in judging distance and picking up a target quickly amid difficult natural surroundings. Proper

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training can do much to perfect inborn facility, judging distance, and selecting targets, but it cannot attain noteworthy results without natural gifts to work upon. The average soldier can be taught to judge distance well enough to be seldom more than a hundred yards out in computing a range of eight times that distance, but a consistent record of far better work than this is the monopoly of the few who have an eye for judging distance, and many commanders would prefer to trust the eyes of such men in action instead of utilizing the most perfect mechanical range-finders.



Modern  
Rifle and  
Bayonet.

Passing from the rifle to the bayonet, it is a great mistake to imagine that this weapon is obsolete, that the days of hand-to-hand fighting are over. More often than not the decisive stage of a battle will demand bayonet work at the finish. Weeks may pass before the moment for cold steel work arrives. Artillery, machine-guns, and rifle fire must clear the way by a ceaseless and well-directed fusillade. But the infantry advance, the body corporate of the attack, must be commenced unless the game of long bowls from behind cover is to be played by both sides until ammunition gives out. And when the advance begins it must go on. To stop is bad; to retreat, fatal. It is more dangerous to lie down still under fire than it is to advance and take advantage of every atom of cover on the way. Rushing from point to point, crawling,



## Weapons of Our Infantry

even wriggling along the ground if need be, the infantry advance, firing as they go, until at last the desired spot is reached, bayonets glitter and clatter on to the rifle muzzles, and the charge is pushed right home. That is the tactical moment which decides the fate of battles, and proves that whatever may have happened to the sword and lance, the bayonet is as important to-day as ever it was.

The moral effect of a bayonet charge is so great that the mere sight of it is often enough to effect its purpose without actually coming to close quarters. In South Africa the foe seldom or never waited for the bayonet, and more fuss than enough was made of the circumstance. The truth is that, excepting the carnage on that foggy morning when the soldiers' battle of Inkerman was fought, and some terrible work in the Soudan when Fuzzy Wuzzy "broke a bloomin' British square," it is open to considerable doubt whether any foeman in the world has ever waited for a stand-up hand-to-hand fight against British troops in a hurry to get to work with the bayonet. There is another exception, of which honourable mention must be made. Man to man, steel to steel, the gallant Maoris gave the British soldier as good as he sent when it came to hand-to-hand work, and that is saying a very great deal.

# The British Army

## CHAPTER X

### CONCERNING MARCHING

THE rifle and bayonet, formidable as they are, have to be carried to the place where they are wanted, or they might as well remain in store. And this brings us to marching, the essential characteristic of the infantryman. A foot-soldier who cannot march is worse than useless, and it is interesting to see how our troops of to-day compare with their predecessors in this respect. The length of the ordinary step—30 inches—is the same as it was in 1833, which takes us far enough back to provide an effective contrast. The number of paces to the minute in slow marching is also unchanged, remaining at seventy-five. In “stepping out” the pace is lengthened by 3 inches to-day exactly as it was in the thirties, but the “quick march” is now 120 paces to the minute instead of the 108 which sufficed in 1833, and modern recruits when not in marching order may be ordered to increase the cadence to 140 paces per minute for short periods. In “double time” the “speeding up” is even more noticeable, as the length of pace has increased from 36 to 40 inches, and the rate from 150 to 180 steps per minute, thus making the soldier of to-day cover 200 yards while his by-no-means remote predecessor was traversing 150. In point of stamina and endurance satisfactory data for comparison in time of peace is scarce. The only

## Concerning Marching

evidence on the point which the writer has been able to collect was provided by an old gentleman who has had exceptional facilities for watching troops at Aldershot for the last half-century, and he was most emphatic in declaring that the soldier of to-day would "march the legs off" the soldier of fifty years ago. Be this as it may, we will go back a good deal farther to find other comparisons. The Duke of Wellington was very proud of his record march. He mentions it in his dispatches, even in the "Selections" made by the indefatigable Gurwood; tells it to Mr. Croker, and thus insures its insertion at length in the familiar "Papers"; and we find it cropping up again in his "Conversations" with Earl Stanhope, where the old Duke says: "The most surprising march, I believe, ever made was one of mine in India—seventy-two miles from five one morning to twelve the next, and all fair marching; nor could there be any mistake as to distance, for in India we always marched with measuring wheels." A fine performance; but, with all due respect to "the Dook," not in the same class as the historic march of the Light Division—the 43rd, 52nd, and 95th Rifles—in the attempt to reach Talavera in time to share in the glorious battle of July 27, 1809. With no other drink to allay their raging thirst than a draught of water from a stagnant horse-pond, the brigade marched fifty miles in twenty-four hours, a truly great feat when it is remembered that each soldier carried from sixty to eighty rounds of ammu-

## The British Army

dition, a musket or rifle, a great-coat, a blanket, a knapsack with kit complete, a canteen and haversack, bayonet, belts, and sundry other items, a load enough for a horse, yet very few men dropped on the road.



Officer of the Old 95th.

This march stands alone in the military annals of its period, and was greatly helped by the stimulus of a constant cannonade in front, which kept the men up, and made them forget for a time their extraordinary fatigue. As a forced march pure and simple it still has to be beaten by any troops in the world. For sustained marching and fighting, however, the South African War is simply packed

with records never before approached by our Army. One instance, taken at random from many, and without the least idea of setting up a "record," tells of the work of the 19th Brigade in the Free State and Transvaal. Within a period of thirty days this brigade fought twenty-one times and marched 327 miles. The casualties were between four and five hundred, the defeats nil!

# Royal Engineers in the Field

## CHAPTER XI

### ROYAL ENGINEERS IN THE FIELD

THE corps of Royal Engineers now demands attention; but it is by no means easy to bring the work of the sappers within the scope of this volume, as, in addition to their purely military duty, it is difficult to name a civilian job, from wireless telegraphy to the making of a window-sash, which is not handled by men of the corps. But sapping and mining, entrenching and escalading, bridging and pontooning, are more the kind of thing the public associates with the Royal Engineers. Subterranean warfare is so ancient that it was well understood and often practised centuries before the introduction of gunpowder. A favourite method was to undermine a wall or bastion, and replace the earth with wooden props, which were destroyed by burning when the mine was "fired," thus bringing the unsupported masonry tumbling down by its own weight.

The writer saw an episode which explains this kind of warfare with graphic clearness. The work began by the engineers driving their tunnel into the side of a hill of solid chalk. Hard work with pick and shovel this; the little trollies so much in evidence had to be filled and emptied over and over again before the task was anything like complete, and as the tunnel was driven farther and farther into the bowels of the earth, a man

## The British Army

equipped like a diver stood by ready to enter the mine and bring out any worker who might be overcome inside the shaft. At last the tunnel had been driven far enough, and we saw the powder-bags taken in. Next, the entrance to the mine was tamped and completely stopped, and everything was ready for the explosion as soon as the detonators were placed and the connecting-wires adjusted. Then from any desired distance the mine was fired by electricity, and the crater formed by the terrific upheaval next comes into the picture. We saw it occupied by infantry, who fired from the shelter afforded by the cavity, and at the same time enlarged it to the best of their ability, exactly as the Japanese did at Port Arthur on many occasions.

Barbed-wire entanglements, which play an important part in both field and fortress warfare, afford congenial employment for the Royal Engineers, and it is hard to say whether the corps is cleverer at making these obstacles than it is at destroying them. A few years ago barbed-wire entanglements were constructed by erecting a formidable maze of wire stretched taut between a number of wooden supports. Nippers to cut the wire, and an extremely ingenious arrangement fixed to a rifle barrel to enable a strand of wire to be shot in halves, soon began to rob these taut entanglements of a portion of their terrors. So the sappers promptly devised something new in barbed-wire entanglements. Instead of stretching barbed wire from fixed points, they arranged a series of plain wire-stays,





BRITISH TRENCHES IN FLANDERS, 1914 PAGE 87



## Royal Engineers in the Field

which served to keep in any desired spot immense masses of tangled barbed wire, all rolled up together anyhow, and looking like a steel edition of the briar bush "Brer Rabbit" was "bred and born in." These are thrown in the space between the plain wires, and the result is an impenetrable hedge of barbed wire, many feet thick, through which no human being could hope to cut a path with wire-nippers, or blow his way with shots from a rifle; in fact, the more "pieces" made in this manner, the worse the tangle, and the greater the trouble of getting over or through it.

Having perfected this means of stopping an attack, the Royal Engineers set to work to defeat their own invention. Various expedients were tried, including even an attempt to bury the barbed wire with mattresses stuffed with hay or straw. For some time the barbed wire held the field against all comers, but at last an officer of Royal Engineers stationed in India invented the "Bangalore torpedo." This consists of a long metal tube filled with dynamite, which is pushed into the barbed wire and exploded, with the result that a path roomy enough to make way for a pair-horse van is blown through the wire entanglement. As might be supposed, placing a "Bangalore torpedo" under fire is not exactly healthy work. No doubt, however, if time permitted, the possibility of a movable steel shield for the "forlorn hope" would not be overlooked by the sappers on active service, especially as the Japanese, in spite of all their magnificent contempt of death, made

## The British Army

considerable use of steel shields in some of their engineering work around Port Arthur.

The fouggrass takes us clean away from barbed wire, but no mention of sapper-work would be complete without referring to this old but still serviceable device for hindering an enemy who wishes to get to close quarters in a big hurry. Lord Wolseley has described the fouggrass so well that the following quotation gives all that need be said on the subject: "Fouggrasses are small mines loaded with stones, bricks, or small live shells. A hole is dug at an angle of forty degrees inclined towards the enemy, at the bottom of which the powder-charge is placed, the stones being placed immediately over the charge; no earth to be placed over the stones, etc. The mine is, in fact, merely an improvised mortar, and if discharged at the right moment when the assaulting-party is close in front of it, its demoralizing effect is considerable even upon the best troops; the position for them is on a road or path over which the enemy must come."

Bridge-building is quite a Royal Engineer speciality, and one bridge in particular will never be forgotten by the author. It was a girder-bridge. We saw the whole thing made and destroyed in a few hours. The material for the bridge in time of war would consist of beams, joists, and floor-boards taken from a house demolished on purpose. They did not smash a house up for "practice purposes," but brought the timber with them, and, judging from its bulk and strength, the gallant

## Royal Engineers in the Field

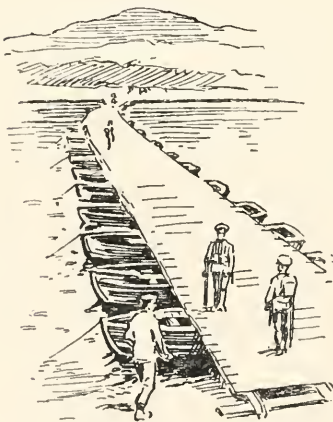
sappers would have to exercise expert discretion in selecting the house they intended to destroy to furnish similar material in war-time. Nothing in the shape or a "highly desirable semi-detached residence" would do, and this military operation appears to be one of the few which modern materials do not facilitate. It is no mere theory, however, this idea of breaking a house to make a bridge, for more than a century ago it emerged triumphantly from a war test. "On July 16, 1809, two companies of the Staff Corps were directed to make a bridge across the Tietar River, near Placenta in Spain. The only materials at hand were the timbers of a large house. This building was unroofed, and the following was found available." Here our veracious and official historian proceeds to detail enough timber to frame half a dozen modern houses, and concludes with the remark: "The flooring of the bridge was made of the doors, mangers, and rafters, which were found sufficient." It appears that this bridge answered every purpose, and there can be no doubt that the modern girder-bridge we saw constructed at Aldershot was an admirable structure, safe enough to satisfy an L.C.C. inspector, and so neat and well finished that it seemed a pity to blow it up.

But it had to be done. In something less than five hours from the time the bridge was commenced by demolishing a house to obtain materials it would be ready in time of war, complete in every detail, and capable of carrying loads up to five tons. Then at any minute an order for its destruction might arrive,

## The British Army

and the scene we saw would be enacted in quick time. The demolition party rode up, and the officer speedily measured the main supports of the bridge to ascertain the amount of explosive required to shatter them. Next, the slabs of gun-cotton were placed in position, the detonators fixed, wires connected, and all was ready. Last to leave the bridge was the officer, and very soon after his departure a sharp explosion, which filled the air with smoke, flame, and splinters, told that the bridge was destroyed.

Other bridges made by the sappers include the suspension bridge, and while at Chatham we saw every stage of the construction of a bridge of this type. The



A Pontoon Bridge.

whole process is far too technical for description here, but it is very picturesque, and it is really fascinating to watch the bridge grow before one's eyes. Exactly the same may be said of the pontoon pier constructed for the use of a landing-party. The pontoons are towed into position, and the plank roadway arranged in an incredibly short space of time. Next,

we saw a splendid body of Royal Marines row up and land as soon as the stage was completed.

## Royal Engineers in the Field

The same Marines attacked a modern trench, and this brings us to another phase of Royal Engineer work. It began in a strange place for the business of war, as the first scene took us into a beautiful piece of woodland, where the sappers were busily engaged in making gabions and hurdles. Gabions are cylinders open at both ends, which, when standing on one end and filled with earth, make a strong revetment, a term applied to any artificial material used for retaining earth at a steeper slope



A Gabion.

than that which it would naturally assume. Gabions can be made of almost any material capable of being bent or woven into cylindrical form, and are usually two feet in diameter and two feet nine inches in length. We saw the manufacture of gabions from brushwood, and when a number had been completed, together with hurdles, we saw them placed in position in a trench, and noted how well they kept the earth firm and secure in any desired position. The trench was deep rather than wide, and appeared to zigzag and twist all over the place to stop enfilade fire taking effect. This was done so cleverly that the trench seemed to have no front or sides at all when considered as a target. To bombard that trench effectively a gunner officer would have to arrange for frontal fire, enfilade fire, and oblique fire, at one and the same time, and

## The British Army

even then he would find his scheme spoilt by ingenious arrangements within the trench designed on purpose to localize the effect of a shell bursting among the defenders.

Overhead shelter was there, and the loopholes through which rifles fired were cunningly arranged so that an approaching foe could scarcely hope to locate them ; in fact, invisibility was the underlying idea of the whole trench. It was not intended to be seen, and so well was the ideal of concealment carried out that, from a comparatively short distance away, the trench needed more than a little finding even by those who knew what they were looking for. Great care is taken to harmonize modern entrenchments with their natural surroundings. No trouble is too great to conceal the trench which conceals the men, and in a broad way it may be said that this consideration is even more important than the actual protection afforded by the trench. The point is that while cover can be made effective enough against rifle and shrapnel bullets, no field defences can be constructed proof against high explosive shells from howitzers. But the great accuracy of high-angle fire necessary to render modern entrenchments untenable cannot be hoped for unless reliable observation of the target can be made, and this is why the sappers have brought the concealment of entrenchments up to the pitch of a fine art. The sappers frankly admit that a gunner who can drop a high explosive shell bang on their overhead cover has them

## Royal Engineers in the Field

beaten to a pulp in ordinary field-works, and they do not begrudge the hit. They need not—the gunner has to earn it.

Entrenchments have not only abandoned the bold and defiant “Here we are in the open, come and take us if you can” notion, but they have also reached a phase which renders the time-honoured custom of “dying in the last ditch” largely obsolete. Purely passive defences are no fetish to-day—the defenders of a trench think nothing of leaving cover and delivering a vigorous counter-charge the moment an attack wavers in the least. Even “pursuit” is part of defence in these hustling times.

Spade-work has, indeed, played a noteworthy part in the great world-war. Entrenchments, especially in Belgium, have been constructed on such a scale and in such masterly style that a slow war of deadly attrition has been the inevitable result. Trenches have become formidable underground fortresses, with “dug-outs” and “funk-holes” on a scale almost extensive enough to entitle them to be called subterranean barracks. Nothing like it has ever been seen before. The trenches and rifle-pits in the Crimea were mere scratches in the earth when compared with the amount of spade-work seen at the front; and what with the quantity of the trenches, and their defensive qualities amounting to almost impregnability, it is safe to assert that they have provided the great surprise of the campaign, greater even than the success of the air-craft.

## The British Army

We learned more than a little concerning the value of cover in South Africa, and many a dodge picked up on the veldt has been brought out again against the Germans. But in spite of all we learned during that three years of war, we never dreamed that entrenchments would become so formidable as this vast conflict has proved them to be. In many ways these field fortifications are better than permanent works of defence. Vast howitzers can batter steel and concrete to fragments, but these weapons merely waste their strength against lines of trenches, difficult to locate, infinitely more difficult to hit, and easily repaired, or even dug afresh on another site, if they chance to be seriously damaged by artillery fire. This war has proved that every infantryman carries his own fortress in the shape of his trusty entrenching tools.

As soon as ground is gained by the infantry, no time is lost in improving it, in "consolidating the position" by digging trenches and facing them with barbed wire. The plan of the trenches is always irregular, to afford protection from enfilade fire, and traverses are constructed which divide the trenches into separate compartments in order to localize the effect of shell fire as far as possible. Communication trenches lead from the subterranean firing line to shelter trenches in rear, where supports are held in readiness, and at stated intervals the men in the first line are relieved, the reliefs passing through the communication trench and taking up their posts without exposing a single



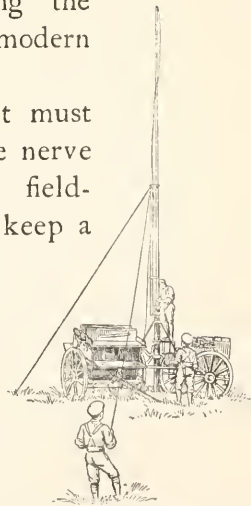




## Royal Engineers in the Field

man. Covered saps may be thrown out in front of the first line with the idea of literally digging a way towards the foe and blowing him up with slabs of gun-cotton. In addition, drainage trenches would always be cut to carry off rain-water whenever the lie of the ground made such work efficacious, if the trenches were occupied for any length of time. The result of all this digging and tunnelling in different directions is war in the bowels of the earth—"fighting in a rabbit-warren," as an officer expressed it—thus giving us in a few words much truth concerning the influence of the humble spade upon modern warfare.

Before leaving the Royal Engineers, it must be pointed out that the Corps controls the nerve centres of the Army, those wonderful field-telegraphs, telephones, and wireless which keep a General in constant touch with troops scattered as only the requirements of modern war can distribute men. On manœuvres the signal companies of Royal Engineers have to work tremendously hard; what their job is like in time of war it is impossible to even imagine. A General expects to be in continuous telegraphic and telephonic touch quite as a matter of course, and as the sappers have to carry all their gear with them, and at least keep up with the troops—getting ahead of them if at all



A Long-Distance Field Wireless Installation.

## The British Army

possible—it will be seen that they have no time to write long letters home about their work. Night and day they are at it, paying out wires across country as fast as horse and man can go, erecting “crossing stations” to carry the wire over roads, or putting up their marvellous field wireless installations. Even then there is no rest; they have to be constantly on the alert to receive or transmit messages, and it is a hundred to one that just when a signal unit fancies it sees a lull in sight and the chance of snatching a few hours’ sleep, the General will be moved by some familiar spirit to give an order which sends the signal sappers into the middle of the next county but one at a moment’s notice.

### CHAPTER XII

#### A PEEP AT THE AIRMEN

OUR intrepid airmen follow the sappers as a matter of course, as the Royal Flying Corps is a direct offshoot of the Royal Engineers. This branch of the Service has proved to be of such value in the field that an army does its best to get out of sight of the “bird-man.” Many ingenious devices are adopted to get troops beyond the ken of the airmen, and a very clever dodge indeed was witnessed by the writer at Aldershot. Infantry were seen marching along a road through a bit of scrubby country, when the signal was given that an aeroplane was approaching. Then, in

## A Peep at the Airmen

amazingly short space of time, literally only a few seconds, the troops broke away and vanished, hiding themselves in whatever cover they could find until the aeroplane had passed and it was safe to resume the march. There can be no doubt that concealment defeats the main objective of the flying man, but, concerning this point, there is much truth in the remark made to the writer by a famous flying officer, who said: "Suppose we grant that troops can conceal themselves under favourable circumstances. Even then it must be admitted that a force scattered and hiding for fear of aeroplanes is too much out of hand to be of real use to a commander, and the employment of aeroplanes is justified even when their special work cannot be done."

This remark rings true enough, and seemed incontrovertible until a famous General to whom it chanced to be repeated, said: "Yes, I can quite see the force of the airman's argument. But suppose a General made an important move on the strength of aeroplane reports which were all wrong, I think the damage would be far greater than that inflicted on the commander whose troops were more or less scattered for the purpose of concealment." What an excellent example this affords of the mass of conflicting points with which modern warfare simply bristles, and how clearly it proves that "the General who makes fewest mistakes" becomes increasingly difficult to train and produce as war and science draw closer and closer together! But when all argument is exhausted there is no gainsaying the

## The British Army

fact that the best General is the man who knows "what the other chap is doing on the other side of the hill," and aeroplanes have placed this knowledge at the disposal of every General to an extent which makes a present from the clouds to each and all of them of knowledge which was formerly only at the disposal of the gifted few, was often purchased at tremendous cost in human life, or, if taken for granted on the strength of a few facts mixed with much brilliant insight, was frequently unreliable.

The actual fighting power of aeroplanes is in its infancy, and nothing much can be written on the subject, as long before these words appear in print the march of events may easily have wrought startling changes which at present are only dimly outlined. One thing is certain—the aeroplane as the eyes of an army has been an unqualified success; it has also done well so far as "like fighting like" goes. More than this carries us almost into the realm of fancy, as it is impossible to say what aeroplanes will do as a purely fighting unit at the point of tactical contact when they are numbered by thousands instead of hundreds, and the loss of a few machines will not hamper the indispensable observation work our airmen have carried out so brilliantly during the war on the Continent.

This peep at the Army would not be complete without at least a mention of those admirable non-combatant branches of the Service which really make or mar the efficiency of the fighting machine. No army can fight

## Caring for the Wounded

unless it is well fed—that is the work of the Army Service Corps, which is not only responsible for feeding the troops but has also to transport the food to the men wherever they happen to be. The Army Ordnance Corps performs a similar service as regards ammunition and munitions of war in general. The Royal Army Medical Corps has a double duty to perform. It has to tend the sick and wounded, and also to take charge of those all-important sanitary and preventive measures which keep the soldiers well and fit for duty.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### CARING FOR THE WOUNDED

R.A.M.C. WORK on active service is very interesting, the more so as military hospitals have a terrible reputation to live down—a reputation which fixed itself upon the public mind when Florence Nightingale was engaged upon her noble work in the Crimea—and has never been altogether removed. How bad things were in the old days simply cannot be stated—the reader would drop this volume with loathing and disgust if it merely quoted the words of “the Lady of the Lamp” in her official reports.



Florence Nightingale.

We find even the incomparable Soyer, who went out to Scutari to teach our troops how to cook their

## The British Army

rations instead of starve on them, complaining bitterly, in spite of his jovial optimism, that, "With all the power with which I was invested by the War Department, coupled with the willing assistance of Captain Gordon, I found it a difficult matter to get a plank, or even a nail, fixed in any of the hospitals." Later still, well within the memory of plenty of serving soldiers, it was considered the thing in a military hospital to take a steam-kettle away from a patient suffering from pneumonia because it was wanted to be shown at the monthly examination of instruments and utensils in use in the hospital ; and for exactly the same purpose hot-water bottles have been claimed from the feet of a patient.

Under modern conditions, however, such as those in existence in the great military hospitals at Aldershot, and elsewhere, the sick soldier is well cared for by capable men and women who do all that is humanly possible to restore him to health.

### CHAPTER XIV

#### HORSES AND MEN

LAST, but by no means least, the Army Veterinary Corps has been established to give the stricken friend of men a chance for life, instead of the bullet which was the only thing mercy had to offer to horses wounded in previous campaigns. This admirable branch of the service has done excellent work at the front, and, quite



## Horses and Men

apart from the humanitarian value of its efforts, the corps has abundantly justified its existence from a purely military standpoint. Many horses which would otherwise have been a total loss have been patched up and returned fit for duty by the veterinary staff, and only those who have had anything to do with the supply of remounts in war-time can quite appreciate the tremendous value of such work. Above all, it appeals to the kindly heart of the British soldier, who is always saddened by the sight of animal suffering. Many a wretched mongrel sniffing around barracks has been taken up and made a "real dog" of by the big-hearted British soldier, and before now dogs picked up in this way have been promoted to the full dignity of a "regimental pet," with a fine silver collar and the requisite licence all paid for out of the men's funds.

There is no end to the generosity of the soldier. He will give away anything he has or can lay his hands on, provided the need is human, urgent, and in front of his face. He is, however, singularly unresponsive to the printed appeal from afar. But let him *see* what strikes him as the "right thing" to do, and the British soldier will do it, often rising to the occasion in a style beyond the ken of the icy intellectuals who see nothing in the soldier except "a fighting machine—trained to kill his fellow-man." Another pen, that of a famous Army chaplain, shall drive this point home. "In many of my barrack-rooms at tea-time," says the writer, "you might have seen some tender-hearted soldier spreading huge

## The British Army

slices of bread-and-jam for a poor little starving boy, who had fled from a cruel home to find refuge with these good-natured lads in the Army. One little boy like this lived for several days with one of my regiments. He had been cruelly ill-treated at home, and some of our men adopted him. They managed to get the key of the storeroom, and there they made a bed of blankets for their poor little pet ; they fed him from their own rations, and when they thought it was time for him to go to bed, his foster-fathers used to say : ‘ Now, then, what ought you to say before going to bed ? ’ The lad didn’t know. So they told him to say his prayers ; and he used to kneel down in the middle of the barrack-room and say, ‘ Our Father,’ while all the men sat on their beds in solemn silence till the prayer was finished and their charge was put to bed.”



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